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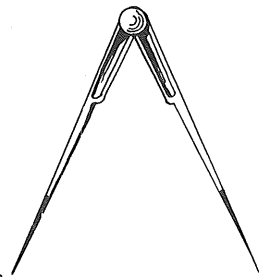
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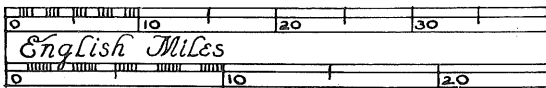
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Cap-de-La-Hague

St. Naser
Beaumont

Cherbourg

Jourlaville

Mesnil

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Brix

Sottevast

Briquer

Valog

Matbourg

St-Sauveur

Cap-de-Carterel

Lessay

Goufanc

Granville

uberville

pe-Eglise

an

Barfleur

Lestre

comte

Douve

Garenfan

St. Lo

Vire

B E S S I N

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Map of
The Old Departments
of the
Cotenin and Bessin
Now called
La Manche and Calvados
1932



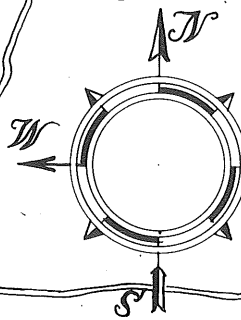
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Port-en-Bessin

Russy

Bayeux

Caen



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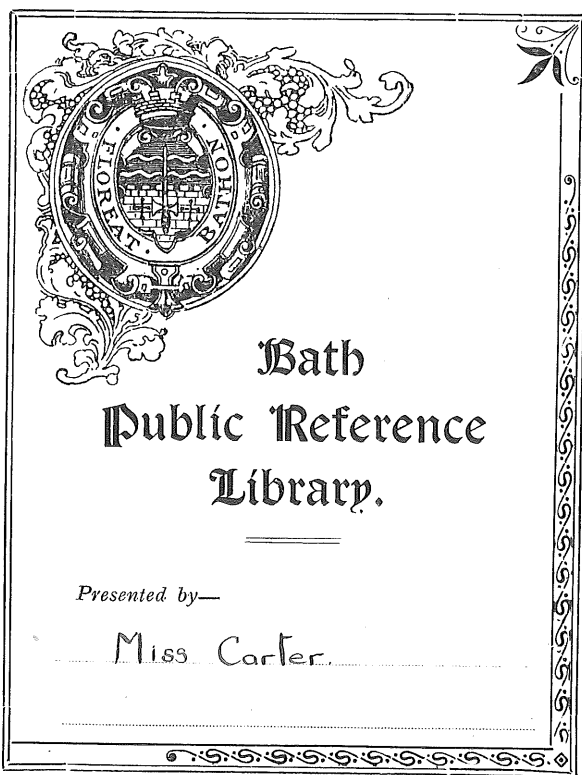
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MANOR LIFE IN OLD FRANCE

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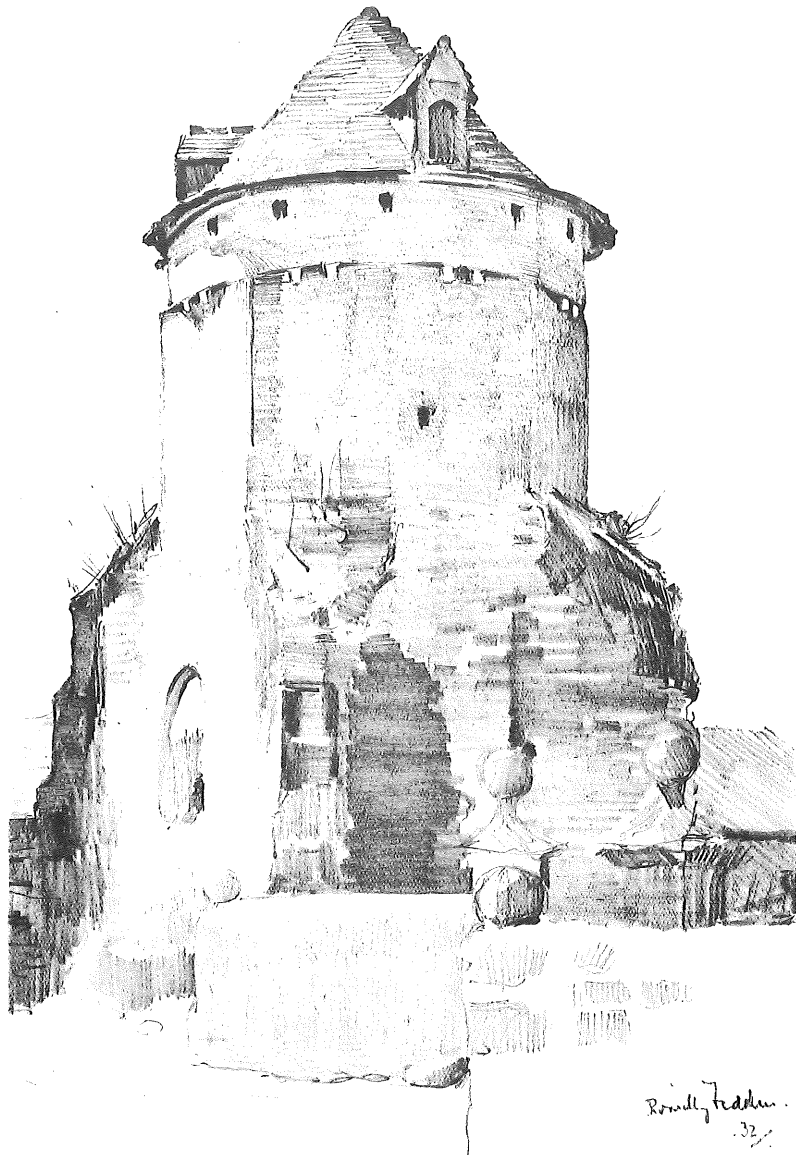
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Translations

ART, BY AUGUSTE RODIN

1900 A.D., BY PAUL MORAND





MESNIL-AU-VAL, 1932

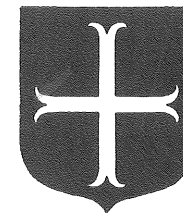
FROM A PENCIL SKETCH BY ROMILLY FEDDEN

*Showing the tower in which is the chapel of Saint Gilles and the pigeon house above,
remaining from the manor of Gilles de Gouberville.*

MANOR LIFE IN OLD FRANCE

FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE
SIRE DE GOUBERVILLE
FOR THE YEARS
1549-1562

By
KATHARINE FEDDEN

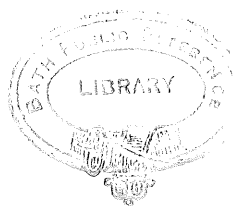


NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY
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TO MY BROTHER
ARCHIBALD DOUGLAS
CHANTEMESLE, 1929-1932

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Introduction

In that legendary time known as "before the war," we were led by a happy chance to the gates of a Normandy manor. A long road took us down a hill, out of Coutances, under the towering Cathedral, past the arches of the Roman aqueduct, towards the sea. Stiff salt grass, purplish mud, an abandoned boat at a creek head, a ruined floodgate, the flight of gulls; a pleasant country, all grays and browns and soft greens; stunted poplars and pollarded willows, quiet fields, grazing sheep, brown thatch, gray walls; then before the dip to the village, the round stone gateposts of the manor.

It stood as a manor should — "sur un petit mont, regardé de Phoebus" — its towers nobly reared. Hawthorne bushes sprang from its boundary walls and a grassy track led by a portly dovecote to the gate. We passed under an arch bearing a worn escutcheon into the courtyard; there the grange with its sundial, "la vie est une ombre qui passe"; the low stone stables; and opposite to us the manor house, a turret at the angle of its wings; a Renaissance door. Inside the house, a flagged and raftered hall, a paneled salon, a spiral stone stair, wide chimneys, deeply embrasured windows looking out across the gardens to the sea. It was a good place to be. Summer came and went and left us there.

Our manor was without a written history. Like most of these old houses, it had fallen from its early estate and become the habitation of simple farming people. But the longer I lived in it, the more I wanted to know about it, about its builder and the life that he had lived there. There were seasons, such as harvest and cider making, the court full of neighbors who had come to help, when I felt that life had not changed very much in the three hundred years since its building. There I was right. France has a beautiful persistence in

her customs. And when the row of men advanced in harmony of swinging flails above the grain laid down upon the stones of the courtyard, they were treading in the footsteps of a long past.

From the village, every country road that I followed led me to other manors, all built in the security of the early sixteenth century. Only their story was wanting. Of châteaux and cathedrals and wars and courts I could read, but I wanted a key to the everyday life that had been lived at Phillebecq and lovely Grâtot, at Dur-Ecu nestled into the wooded hill. A love of these gray old houses possessed me, and a longing, which would not be stilled, to know their intimate history. It came finally to the ears of Mademoiselle, one of those whimsical, forthright elderly Frenchwomen who make everyone's business their own, especially when their help and authority may be called into play.

Mademoiselle was for a time inclined to satirical amusement at such disproportionate interest in her pile of old stones, but finally appeared one day to announce decisively that she had remembered — the Sire de Gouberville could tell me all that I wanted to know. Where was he? She smiled. He was a book. And only she could procure him for me, by using her influence upon the custodian of the library at Coutances. Moreover, she would take the diligence the very next day and we should see what we should see. I must know that it was a rare book and, without her, I should be powerless to possess it. I made myself humble and grateful enough.

The following evening, down from the diligence — still a plodding, horse-drawn thing — bundled the lady, pride and triumph on every feature, a small, fat volume in her hand. She opened the book and held it out to me, tapping upon the title-page.

And so we met, the Sire de Gouberville and I. For there I read:

Journal Manuscrit
d'un

Sire de Gouberville
et du Mesnil-au-Val.

Gentilhomme Campagnard au Cotentin
de

1553 à 1562

par

l'Abbé Tollemér.

Valognes, 1872.

The manuscript journal of a country gentleman of the sixteenth century! Was it possible that the door had opened and that I could walk, as I had so often longed to do, through the courtyard and into the very heart of the life of that time?

I hurried with my treasure into the house. I sat down and there I read how the Abbé Tollemér, happening into a farmhouse kitchen in Basse Normandie one day, noticed on the table a curious roll of time-colored paper in a cover of parchment. He asked what it was and was told that it was an old account book of no interest whatever, belonging to Monsieur de la Gonnivière of the Château de Saint-Germain-Varreville. He picked it up, amused at its odd shape — 30 centimeters long, 10 centimeters wide and 10 centimeters thick, its leaves bound together with linen thread and tied into the parchment cover by strong string — and opened it to find the following title-page:

Expenditures made by me, Gilles de Gouberville, from the twenty-fifth day of March, 1553;¹ with notes upon all matters which have arisen since that date, touching my own affairs as well as those of other people, all of which will be found, every day, month and year as hereinafter appears.

The abbé could have been no more moved by that reading than was I. Yes, he may have been; for, after all, I was reading it in print, while he had read the black and beautiful six-

I turned the leaves further. The closely-packed pages of fine print had not the look of a journal. Again I read that after discovering the manuscript, after deciphering the difficult script, after transcribing it all, the abbé had decided not to publish the Journal, as written day by day, but his own résumé of the contents.

This was a bitter disappointment. Just when I thought that I was to have it all at first hand! A further reading almost reconciled me, for the abbé was a pleasant person, naïve, so devoid of humor as to be amusing, and he had worked with passionate devotion, deciphering and classifying his material till he became possessed by the character of that Sire de Gouberville whom he had resurrected from his three-hundred-years' grave. Every page, of the eight hundred to which the book ran, intensified my longing to read the original Journal. Since the abbé had transcribed it, might it not have been printed somewhere? If so, I should find it.

Then came the War. The sixteenth century faded and paled before the present and it was years before the chance finding amongst my papers of a few pages of translation from the abbé's book — "The Journey to Blois" — set me off on my quest. On what delightful paths has it not led me, what good friends has it not brought me — that company of posthumous admirers of the old sire, who have made a study of his life and times; what kindness have they not shown me, until, in this very year, my search for the Journal came to an end in another old Normandy manor.

There on the very spot where Gilles de Gouberville often alighted at the door of his friend, the Sieur de Bras, I, at last, held the full text of the Journal in my hands. Not only for the years 1553-1562, which the abbé transcribed from the roll of manuscript found in the old kitchen, and which was privately

July 1550

Le lundy 22^e d'Aoust 1774
 Je vous prie de m'envoyer
 le plus tôt possible un
 exemplaire de votre
 ouvrage, car j'en
 ai grand besoin pour
 ma bibliothèque. Je
 vous prie de m'en
 adresser un aussi à
 M. de la Harpe, à
 Paris, & à M. de
 la Motte, à
 Valenciennes. Je
 vous prie de m'en
 adresser un aussi à
 M. de la Harpe, à
 Paris, & à M. de
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FACSIMILE PAGE OF THE JOURNAL OF
SIRE GILLES DE GOUBERVILLE

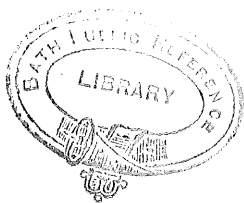
printed for the Société des Antiquaires de Normandie in 1893, but an earlier part, for the years 1549 to 1552, found after the death of the abbé — one is so sorry that he never saw it — and published by the Société des Antiquaires de Normandie in 1895.

Here, too, in the library of the manor, looking out upon the clear spaces of the park to the Lebanon cedar and the wood beyond, I was intrusted with the rare monographs on the Sire de Gouberville written by the Marquis de Blangy, a nobleman with a taste for archeology, and the owner, by long inheritance, of the Château of Saint-Pierre-Église near Cherbourg, who had the good fortune to discover in his muniment room not only the earlier part of the Journal referred to above, but valuable papers relating to the Sire de Gouberville and his time.

As I had foreseen, the interest of possessing the full text of the Journal has grown with acquaintance. The sixteenth-century French presents difficulties; many of the words are obsolete; many must be tracked through one dictionary after another and only run to earth in Henri Moisy's beguiling *Dictionnaire du Patois Normand*, filled, as it is, with copious quotations which establish the relation of the patois to French, Latin and English. Here you discover many words lost to the French language, but still found across the Channel.

And now, in my desire to put into English a picture of the life in the old Normandy manors, I am met by the same problem that confronted the Abbé Tollemer, and I mean, after all, to solve it very much as he did and to endeavor to reconstruct that life from the Journal itself, with the help of the abbé's own writings, rather than to give a translation of the daily entries during thirteen years of the Journal.

A word now as to the value of this Journal of the Sire de Gouberville. It belongs in the category of what are known in France as *livres de raison*; daybook best expresses it in



English. It is something more than a journal, more than a book of accounts, a combination of the two; a family register in which the head of the house carefully noted the investment of his substance, the dates and details of all bargains and contracts, the facts of births, marriages and deaths, as well as the trivial events of the daily round. Such a family register is a complete evocation of a past day. Here are reflected the joys and sorrows of a household; here, too, is a faithful record of the material side of life. There are many such records in existence in France, most of them from the Midi. A few remain of the fourteenth century, more of the sixteenth, others of the seventeenth, and a few of the eighteenth.

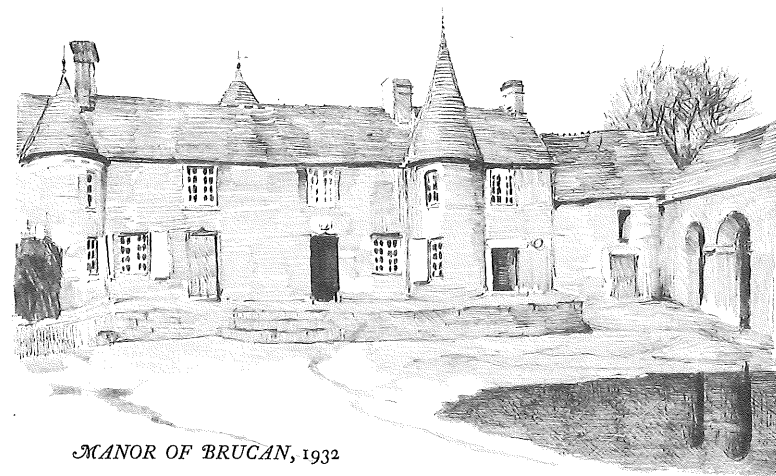
The importance of these records varies as much as their dates and the places where they were written. Some have historic interest, others present only a succession of terse entries. But whatever their style and scope, whether written by country gentleman, merchant, magistrate or simple bourgeois, all alike initiate us into the civil, military and religious customs of past times as no dry history can.

No other of these *livres de raison* is so complete, and few are so interesting, as that of the Sire de Gouberville. He seldom writes his own impressions or feelings, but the facts which he presents are so exact, so varied, and are entered with such sustained regularity, that from the bulk of these notes emerges an outline, singularly clear and sharp, of rural life in the manors of the sixteenth century.

Before crossing the threshold of that life, it is a pleasure to record my indebtedness and thanks to M. Paul Le Brethon, Archiviste-Paléographe, Bibliothécaire Honoraire de la Bibliothèque Nationale, and to M. Albert Cartier-Bresson, who placed their extensive knowledge of this subject and their library of Norman bibliography at my disposal; and to my son, Mr. H. Romilly Fedden, for his assistance in the translation of the Journal.

K. F.

MANOR LIFE IN OLD FRANCE



MANOR OF BRUCAN, 1932

The birthplace of Gilles de Gouberville's friend,
Charles de Brucan

Romilly Fedden
31

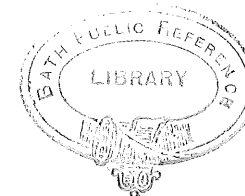
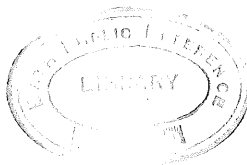
CHAPTER I

Of the Sixteenth-Century Manor House

It was in 1521 that Gilles de Gouberville was born. It was a good time to see the light, for France, the first nation in Europe, was enjoying a golden age that, alas, was all too short. The national spirit, freed from the trammels of feudalism and the pressure of the Hundred Years' War, was finding expression in all its native originality, gaiety and fearlessness. With the century had come an end to the continual strife between petty powers; yet, while the king was the recognized head of the state, he had not absorbed all power and drained the country of life, as his successors were to do.

Gilles de Gouberville was born in a moment of calm, of equilibrium between the particularism of the Middle Ages and the absolutism of succeeding times. Like other sixteenth-century country gentlemen, he had a vivid memory of the battles, fought during the feudal wars and foreign invasions, to defend and protect the family inheritance, and the result was a profound attachment to the soil which had come to him at the price of courage and sacrifice. He lived on his own lands in his own province, in distinction from the aristocracy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who were a mob of court followers, living at court or in the obscure ranks of a king's regiment.

The early sixteenth century was a period of peace and prosperity. Labor was cheap and plentiful. More than that, there was abroad, throughout the civilized world, a quickening of the spirit, an ebullition of vitality, which was flowering in art, in adventure. As galleons sailed high seas, crossed the Atlantic and the Pacific, so the ships of the spirit sailed new seas of thought — Columbus and Copernicus, Pizzaro and Martin Luther.



It was a day of sharp contrasts; there was a frenzy of activity, industry, movement. Everyone wanted to live, to love, to enjoy; even the bourgeois demanded romance. There was hardly a family without its scandal or its heroism. Life was a pageant, through which moved the great romantic figures, Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, François I, Henri I, Catherine de' Medici, Diane de Poitiers, the Guises.

It was in this great *décor* that Gilles de Gouberville had his more humble place. In himself, in his family and his friends, we see personified the customs, the passions, the morals of his day. In his Journal we live the daily life of the sixteenth century, not as we know it in the pages of Brantôme, but as it was lived far from court, in the provinces. His stage is crowded with figures; a background of servants and laborers and priests and furnishers, of passing travelers, against whom stand out at moments such vivid actors as Matignon, Coligny and Montgomery. For, born in the golden age of the early sixteenth century, the seigneur was to see the outbreak of the religious wars and to end his days in gloom.

Gilles de Gouberville was Seigneur of the Manors of Gouberville and Mesnil, in the county of Valognes, in that part of Normandy known as the Cotentin; the Cotentin, the old name which still outlives later departmental designations here, as in so many parts of France; the Cotentin, all the country within the Cherbourg peninsula as far south as a line drawn roughly from Vire to Granville, with Saint-Lô as its capital just within its eastern border; the Cotentin, rich in all those milestones of the long way that our civilization has followed, from the prehistoric Allée des Pouquelets on the downs above the cliffs at Vauville and the Roman treasures of Helleville, to the lighthouse at Cherbourg which sweeps the coast tonight with its long fingers. Somewhere in between, we find the thirteenth century at its best in the Cathedral of

Coutances, the sixteenth century in the sequestered manors, the seventeenth century in the beautiful houses of Valognes.

It was on the shores of the Cotentin that the Norsemen landed before they entered the Seine and made their way to Paris. Here the Middle Ages saw the same constant conflicts as elsewhere between great feudal lords. Here the Hundred Years' War with the English kept the country poor. And here the wars of religion in the sixteenth century took their toll in life and property and the Gothic carvings of the church porches. The terror of the Revolution came even here, and the romantic ill-doomed attempt of the Chouans cost the life of the young La Touche at Granville.

It is a very pleasant country, this depicted so faithfully in the pages of the Journal. Driving through it, we feel that it has changed very little since the Sire de Gouberville rode it from end to end, on his good *haquenée*. It is a farming land, broken by wooded hills and bits of gorse land, intersected by many streams, reminiscent of England in its small fields and hedgerows, and guarding the speech of William the Conqueror on the remoter farms.

Gouberville, the property from which the Sire de Gouberville took his name, lies about twenty-five kilometers from Cherbourg, towards Barfleur. To reach it, you follow a rough and narrow road, or lane, between stone walls, through tiny grey hamlets, under great beech trees, with glimpses of the sea through wind-swept thorns to your left. Hopefully you arrive before the church of Gouberville, with its curious round towers, only to find that the old manor has been so effectually replaced by a new and ugly château, that not a stone remains to recall the sire and his time. Yet the church looked down upon the manor and saw the sire ride into the courtyard followed by his *laqué*, come to superintend the harvesting, to hold court, to plant his hundreds of apple trees, or, possibly, to be out of the way of dangerous visitors to Mesnil.

Running on from the village of Gouberville to lunch at the inn at Barfleur, you pass many a familiar spot: the rocks of Roucbari, where the sire and the vicar and the villagers shot their nets, the great rock of Fouyer where the lighthouse now stands, and that reedy pool of Gattemare to which Gilles de Gouberville laid emphatic claim in 1548, in an affidavit which reads:

The said Gilles de Gouberville affirms that from all time and before the Duchy of Normandy was united to the crown of France, the Sires de Gouberville have enjoyed the right to take and to fish at the pool of Gattemare all manner of birds and fish that they might catch with any kind of net or implement whatever, without their right being impugned by anyone.

Although it was from the Manor of Gouberville that the seigneur derived his name, he lived at his Manor of Mesnil-au-Val. It is Mesnil-au-Val that becomes our center in the Journal, from which all interest and action radiate, and it is there we must go if we would relive his life.

An exciting pilgrimage, this, for who knows if anything is left of the place which we have come to know so well in his pages? From Gouberville let us follow the way that he so often took; first to the little market town of Saint-Pierre-Église, with its big square and the church which saw that affray in which the sire's godson, the young de Raffoville, was wounded.

From Saint-Pierre-Église we drive by Gonneville to Digo-ville, tiny hamlets both, where at the crossroads we see, beyond fields, the towers of a manor. Have we reached our goal? Is it Mesnil-au-Val? We stop. A man comes out from the inn on the corner. No, it is not Mesnil, but the Manor of Brucan.

Brucan! Where Charlot lived, Charles Brucan, Gilles de Gouberville's trusted bailiff and friend! We leave the car by the roadside and enter a wide, grass-grown avenue between

magnificent beech trees. Trees three hundred years old, planted in that sixteenth century when men had turned from strife to the enjoyment of life. Gone was the need for moat and battlemented wall and, as an expression of the fresh outlook, these trees were planted, the manor house was built. A fine, a romantic approach to the gate it is, and there, across the courtyard stands the impressive grey mass of the house, flanked by two towers, its central door approached by a wide sweep of steps. This house was built, not for defence, but to practice the new art of living.

Into these manors in the depths of Normandy, the spirit of beauty found its way, that beauty which was alive and flashing upon the world through many vehicles: the genius of Michael Angelo, Da Vinci, Botticelli, Donatello. The range of thought and inspiration that could reach from Rabelais to Calvin, had pause for the designing of these manors, as it had for the châteaux of France. The Renaissance touched these houses with its grace. Instead of narrow slits for reconnaissance and defense, windows grew wide, embrasured, where sun and air found entrance. In place of outer battlements, gardens spread and flowers were planted. The low arched doorways, though still preserved in barn and stable, grew in the dwelling with charm of carving and upward line.

Have we not Philibert Hegemon's description of the ideal manor, in his poem written in 1683, of which I must give a verse in its charming old French:

... l'enclorre est un lieu, ou est un petit mont
Regardé de Phoebus, dois qu'aparoit son front,
Jusque tant que noire nuit nous domine,
Sur le pendant duquel j'ai planté torte vigne,
Et au bas aplani, un petit bastiment,
Qui tient mes domestiques a couvert seulement.
Au plus près et joignant, est la fontaine vive,
Que la claire aube voit aussitot qu'elle arrive.
Au devant (pour voiller du midi la chaleur)

The Sixteenth-Century Manor

Est la bocage frais, umbré de feuille et fleur
Aligné et touffu de douce, aigre, cerisée
et d'afranchis coudriers: au-dessus le divise
Le ruisseau cristallin lequel plein de cresson
Et de saules bordé, avec murmurant son
Coule contre couchant, le long d'un chemin large
Qui contre la bize a pour abri et pour targe
Un pendant esmaillé de fraisiers savoureux.

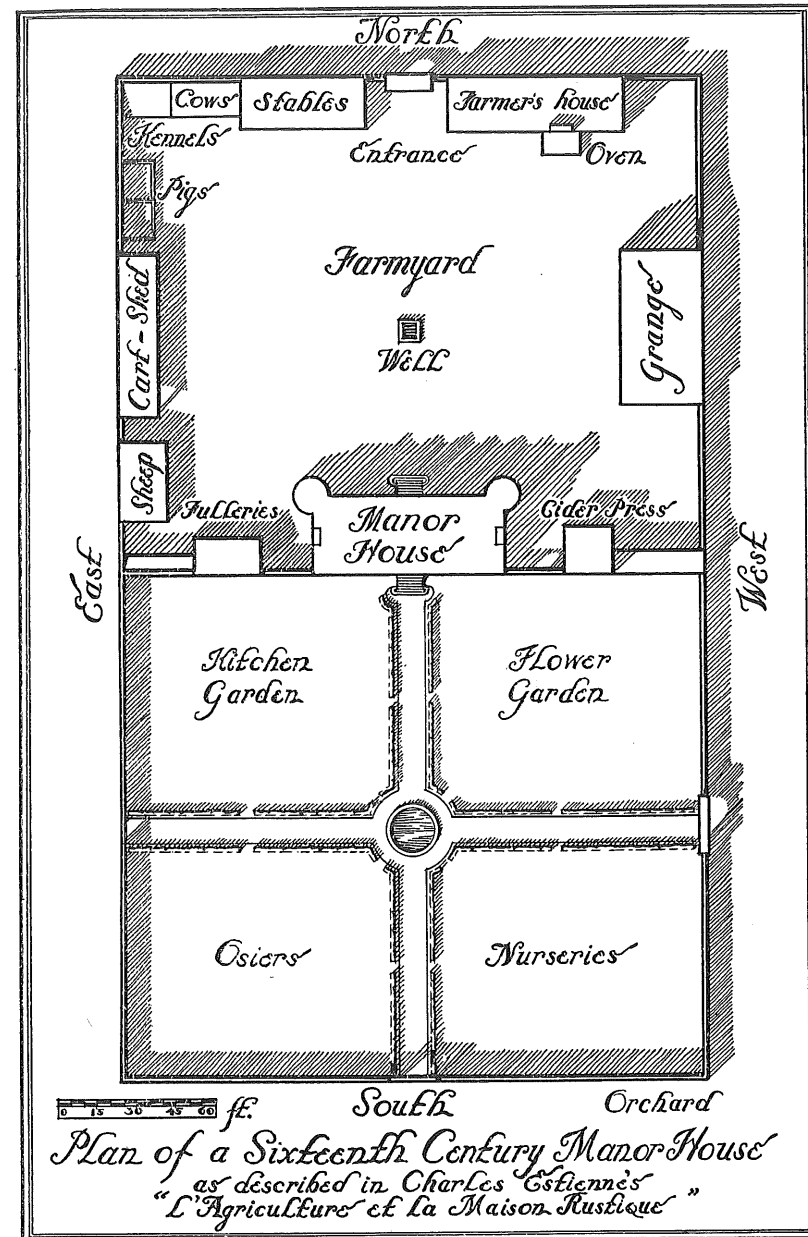
Ce ruisseau (passant) peut le prey abreuver
Qui est contre l'autan; puis va se descharger
Le long de deux jardins, dans lesquels aux chaleurs
On peut le faire entrer pour humecter les fleurs.
Entre ces deux jardins est la maison petite
Ou le rustiq clousier et sa famille habite.
Le four n'en est pas lin, ey un peu a cartier
Est l'étable et pressoir, la grange et columbier.

Au milieu du basti et devant est la cour,
Ou le fangeux pourceau su retour de champs, court.

La le poulain gaillard arrive en sautellant,
La laineuse brébis et son agneau belant.
Au derrier de la grange et du pressoir ja buyde
est le plaisant verger au penchant du pourpris
Regardant le midy. Et au val est compris
En rangs bien ordonnez une ombreuse sausaie
La cerve du poisson et la franche ozeraye.
Au reste, ce pourpris d'un fossé environne
Bordé de saules verts. . . .

Less poetic and more practical is Charles Estienne's work, published in 1564, entitled *L'Agriculture et la maison rustique*, where we find that French love of order and coördination which seeks the best model and, when it is found, accepts it and continues to follow it. On the plans here laid down, the manor houses were built, the walls were raised, the gardens were mapped.

Brucan stands as an example.² As you read the careful directions in Estienne's book, you may verify them in the buildings before you.



Imagine [he says] a large and spacious courtyard, in the middle of which you will dig a pit for your manure and beyond that a well; with two or three large stone troughs to water your beasts and poultry, unless you are blessed with a spring.

This court, an acre square, should be surrounded by a wall 18 inches thick and 10 feet high, against which to place your buildings and to guard against the danger of robbers.

In the center of your wall, looking toward the setting sun, you will make your entrance gate, with a pent roof to give shelter when it rains. And the gate must be high and wide enough to give entrance to a cartload of sheaves or of hay.

Outside the gate, near the road, you will have a paddock of 5 or 6 acres, well ditched, for grazing such beasts as are ill or unfit to be in the herds; where they may rest and ruminate in peace during the long hot days.

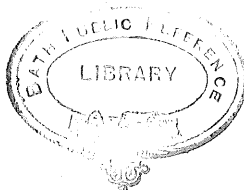
The house for your farmer will be built inside the gate to the left and its windows will open on the court facing the morning sun. His oven should project from the building, with its mouth by the hearth within; the bolting room should be above.

To the left there will be a room for the dairy and for stores of food, with a cellar beneath.

In this house there shall be a room for the farmer and his wife and one adjoining for the children and serving women. Beyond these a sufficiently large apartment to keep his wood, his tools and other necessary implements. The upper floor of this building will serve to store fruit, vegetables, herbs and roots.

To the right of the gate, on entering, shall be the stables for the horses, with a large room to lodge the carters and other men servants and also to keep the collars, saddles, traces and other trappings for the horses. Next to the stables for the horses should come the cow sheds and the kennels beyond. And, above all these, in the lofts, the hay and forage for the stock.

Opposite to the gate of your manor, should be the entrance to your house, reached by a flight of eight steps. To the right of the entrance should be your kitchen and a room for two or three personal servants. Then come your cider presses and fulleries. On the other side will be your cellars for wine and cider. You will enter your rooms, your ante-room and your wardrobe to the right, leaving as much room on the opposite side for your friends and the stranger. Make your principal windows looking out on the gardens to the east, and pierce small win-



dows only on the court, in order to watch your servants and to see who comes and goes. At the end of each building make a privy for the needs of each. Beyond your cellars place your chicken house, and beyond the fullery your dovecote.

The chicken house should be built so that the lower part will serve for the waterfowl, such as geese and ducks, while the upper part will be for the chickens, with perches and nests for laying. And you must make a division for the turkeys and turkey cocks and one for the pheasants, enclosed with a lattice. As for the peacocks, they have liberty to stray anywhere.

Place your pigsties and sheepfolds against the wall to the north, so that they look out only into the court, and divide the principal sheepfold into two, to separate the lambs and the ewes from the rams. In the same way divide the pigsties. Do the same for the goats. Above in the lofts, keep the forage and food for the flocks. Between the folds and the pigsties, you will build an open shed to shelter your carts, plows, drays, sledges.

Opposite on the south side you will build your grange with its great door, large enough to give light to the threshers. One side will be to store your buckwheat and rye, the other for your March seeds.

Below or beside your house steps, depending on the size of your house, your farmer will have an entrance to the gardens; but you will enter the gardens by another stair leading from your apartments into them. Of these gardens, the one on the right will be for the kitchen and the other for the flower beds, with a place for the hives of the honey bees.

You will have a long alley, bordered by evergreen hedges, running from your steps to the wall, beyond which is the orchard. Half way down this broad alley will be your well for watering the garden by canals or gutters, unless you bring the water of a spring or else make a cement cistern for rain water.

The orchard will be the way from your house to the pastures beyond, by a little stream refreshing the orchard, along whose banks you will plant your willows.

At the entrance to the orchard on the garden side, you will have your nursery garden with your slips and your seedlings. There at the end you will plant your osiers in rows where they can get the dampness from the brook.

The gate on the side of the field, for your own use, should be embellished by two chevrons on an architrave, with four or five crenelations above and closed by a strong door; for by this you will enter and leave

your house in secret, when it seems good to you, without the knowledge of your household and without the bad odor of the stables.

How delightfully, how practically, how meticulously planned! And though devised in acres, how modest beside that other sixteenth-century plan, wherein Francis Bacon recommends, "for gardens, the contents ought not to be under thirty acres of ground and to be divided into three parts; a green in the entrance; a heath or desert in the going forth; and the main garden in the midst; besides alleys on both sides."

As we stand at the gate looking at Brucan's towers, our hopes rise high for Mesnil. If Brucan has stood unchanged like this for four hundred years —

We take the road again and a mile farther on we come to the great crucifix that marks the lane down which turned that long, long-dead procession.

Alas, nothing remains of Gilles de Gouberville's manor but a solitary old round tower rising above the new roofs of prosperous farm buildings. Four new gateposts to the courtyard are crowned by old stone balls. Do we recognize them? Were they not given in July, 1549, to Gilles de Gouberville by the Captain of the Château at Cherbourg? The sire was delighted with the present and sent them home in Birette's cart which happened to be in Cherbourg with a load of wood. How have they ever survived time and change to adorn this new cemented wall?

A yellow-haired girl comes from the farmhouse to answer my question. Her father³ found them buried in a ditch, dug them out and replaced them here. Yes, this is the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val, but she has never heard of anyone named de Gouberville. We may look about, if we like.

So here we are. The present vanishes. The new buildings cease to exist. By the stones of Brucan, by Charles Estienne's

careful description and by the pages of the Journal, we rebuild for ourselves the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val. We step through the tower's Gothic doorway into the Chapel of Saint Gilles, dedicated to the patron saint of the "bon sire." Cobwebs festoon the Gothic vaulting and fodder piles the floor where Messire Jacques Auvrey said mass on saints' days to the assembled household. A stair leads up in the thickness of the wall to the dovecote above.

This chapel must once have adjoined the manor house, which we will have towered and turreted and approached by the eight degrees of courtesy. The kitchen and the courtyard would be teeming with servants. Yonder would be the great grange and the barns for the stock. Fine buildings, for, in 1560, what with masons and carpenters, villagers and servants, it was a party of thirty men who were engaged in raising the frame of the latest barn. They all worked until it was dark and then feasted in the kitchen, at the bon sire's expense, and danced in the great hall. "It was after midnight when they left," he says; to find their way home along the lane from the gate, half a mile, between the manor woods and fields, to the village of Mesnil-au-Val. That was the way the seigneur followed every Sunday morning to mass at the village church, unless he were prevented by illness. Often early mass was said here in the chapel on a week day by some traveling Franciscan brother who had come to the manor doors the night before.

From those hospitable doors, no one was ever turned away. The number of guests is incredible. No day passes without the arrival of one or many, friend or stranger, who "passed and stayed to sup." It was the custom of the day when inns were few, roads bad, and the seigneur offered in bed and board the hospitality expected of his position. What a picturesque and motley procession of people it was who passed close along the main road from Valognes to Cherbourg and

turned in here at the crucifix! They were all on foot or on horseback. There was no other means of road travel. No carriages, no stagecoaches. Indeed, if we remember right, there were but six stagecoaches in England as late as 1672. However far you were going in the sixteenth century, according to your condition you walked and carried your pack, or you rode and your baggage followed on a pack horse.

Here were abbots mounted and friars on foot; mercers and furriers carrying wares to display to the seigneur after supper in the kitchen; wool merchants from Paris to buy up the Mesnil fleeces; messengers from Rouen to Cherbourg carrying letters of importance — post, of course, there was none, and letters found transport by travelers; the falconer from England with falcons, or with English dogs to sell; officers back from camp with servants and baggage; gentlemen and nobles, dignitaries of church and state, with their trains of servants, all mounted, with pack horses; a belated sportsman with gun and dog; the stag hunt from Bricqueville, huntsmen and riders, and horses and dogs, to the number of forty, for dinner and bed and breakfast; and again, a wandering scholar from Tours, a student of philosophy seeking the Fortunate Isles, whose name was never asked — he was called the Tourangeau — who came for a night and remained for two years.

They throng the courtyard, and dominating them all is Gilles de Gouberville. He was neither a saint nor a sage. His birth and fortune were not extraordinary. But we know him in turn as huntsman and sportsman, farmer, justice, student — he had his Latin and some Greek — administrator, experienced agriculturist, officer of the King as Maître des Eaux et Forêts for the Cotentin, friend of the whole countryside, counselor and father to his peasants, a man of action, of large sympathies and warm heart, who loved his family and his friends and this, his Manor of Mesnil-au-Val.

CHAPTER II

Sire Gilles and His Household

Gilles de Gouberville belonged to that brave *petite noblesse* of the provinces who were the backbone of France. His family name was Picot, which, though it has an undistinguished sound, was that of an ancient family bearing arms, *gueules à la croix ancrée d'argent*, tracing its descent from 1270 and connected, moreover with all the ancient nobility of the Cotentin.⁴

It was in the month of November, 1555, that the Procureur Général and Président Mandreville from the Court of Rouen were charged with the task of verifying the titles of the noble families of the Cotentin, "both those that are noble and those that pretend to be." It was important for these families to furnish the required proof, that they might be maintained in their ancient rights and privileges and escape the heavy penalties adjudged against those who had usurped such privileges.

We find the seigneur searching the manor house for the old deeds of the Gouberville property. It was an anxious moment. One or two of his acquaintances, who passed by the manor and stopped for a drink, told him that all those who had not proved their noble descent by title were declared forfeit and condemned to the loss of six years' revenue. It is safe to say that there was no peace in the manor that day until amongst his mass of papers in chest or cabinet, he finally found those he required. It was then already nightfall and it was only after supper that he sat down finally to the task of preparing his letters and title deeds, which took him until midnight. Upon examination, he was delighted to find that they were all in order from January, 1400, renewed every fifteen years, down to April 1517.

But the seigneur seldom left anything to chance; and so we see him dining with the Procureur Général and the Président at Valognes and, over the wine, establishing a personal relationship with them, as he was constantly doing with all manner of men. From them he learned incidentally that his family were not on the register of the nobles of the Viscounty of Valognes, but on that of Bayeux.

So, a fortnight later he appeared, with his uncle and cousin, before the commissioners at Bayeux,

to whom we showed our papers dating back over 280 years, proving our ancestors noble, Seigneurs of Russy, Saint-Honorine, Grandval, Colleville and Gouberville. The Président told us that he had found Guillaume Picot on his roll for the year 1463.

Here we have the full style of the family titles, as held by Gilles de Gouberville's grandfather, who at his death, left the properties to be divided between his two sons, Jean and Guillaume de Gouberville. Jean de Gouberville, Gilles' uncle, inherited Russy, Saint-Honorine, Grandval and Colleville in the Bessin; and Guillaume de Gouberville, Gilles' father, inherited Gouberville, and then married Jeanne Du Fou, the heiress of Mesnil-au-Val.

A charming letter still exists from this lady to her husband with the pretty ending: "Your loyal wife and best friend always." She gave her husband seven children, and it was not until after her death in 1526 that he entered into other and irregular relations.

Gilles de Gouberville himself was not married. This is not to say that he never thought of marrying, for we find one or two entries which touch on the subject. The first is in 1556 and is written in Greek characters, his habit when entering any intimate fact; although it is very doubtful if anyone else in the manor knew how to read. In these few words he records that he had tried to borrow money from his uncle, Jean de Gouberville, Sire de Russy, "to get married." Like many

another large landed proprietor, the seigneur was often short of ready money. His uncle's refusal to make the loan was so peremptory that it piques our curiosity as to the reason. Anyway, rumors of his marriage were in the air, for the next year he records, with rather childish vanity, that as he and his neighbors and cronies — to the number of twelve — sat at dinner at one table in the kitchen, all his servants eating at another table close by, Gilles Lamache rose and declared that he would give him a puncheon of wine "when he married," to which Richard le Gros promptly added a promise of two more. Here was encouragement for him. He inscribes the names of all those present with care, as if to call them as witnesses to the offer in case he should fulfill his part of the contract.

In spite of such inducement, he preserved the independence of the bachelor state all his life. Yet the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val was the home of a large family numbering no less than twenty-two people. Of these, fourteen were servants, nine men and five women, whom their master referred to by the pleasant old word, *serviteur*. These servants were hired at the yearly hiring fairs: La Magdalaine at Valognes, July 22; Sainte Marie at Réville, July 26; Sainte Marie at Montfarville, July 22; and Saint Clerc at Negreville, July 18, the only one of these fairs which still exists.

At daybreak on these fair days, the roads would be humming with people from château, farm and manor, all converging to the same place for the yearly reshuffle of masters and servants. There, as in England, the servants were gathered in groups, bearing the sign of their calling, carters, shepherds, ditchers and cowherds, milkmaids and cooks, young and old, dark and fair, stupid and clever, awaiting the master's eye. Then followed a parley and yearly wages offered and accepted. These were generally paid, part in money and part

in kind; a shirt and boots for the men, a piece of white cloth and shoes for the women.

Often, however, the wages were taken out entirely in kind; either by farm animals — a heifer, a mare and foal, or a pair of steers — or in so many measures of buckwheat or rye. Such payments were probably to the married laborers who had been given a piece of land to which they attached themselves with that passion for the soil which one sees in France today. Many of the names of servants run through the thirteen years of the Journal. Yet we are amused to find a familiar note of annoyance as we read that Guionne Cardon left early one morning to work for the curé "without saying good-by," or that Jehan Bottet went after the cows at the Clos des Ventes and from there took a summary leave.

The highest wage recorded for a man was 10 livres a year, followed by 9 livres and a pair of shoes; 7 livres, 10 sols, a pair of shoes and 5 sols of wine; and the goatherd got 2 livres, 10 sols and a pair of shoes. The highest wage for a woman was 4 livres for everything; the general wage was 2 livres, 10 sols, which was varied by the addition of shoes, chemise, apron or hood.

The fourteen servants were engaged on work in and about the manor, but do not include Lajoye, the sire's *laqué*, his confidential servant and personal attendant. Lajoye always journeyed with his master and evidently took life as it came, the bad with the good, since he got a beating when he failed in his duty, leaving the gate of the manor open when he went to play bowls.

The composition of the seigneur's immediate family is somewhat astonishing to anyone not familiar with the customs of his time.

The lady at the head of his house was Guillemette, "the natural daughter of my late father"; one of his father's five

illegitimate children — Symonnet, Arnould, Jacques and Noël being the others — all of whom found a home beneath his roof.

This is typical of the number of illegitimate children in the sixteenth century, and the place that they occupied. A man considered himself as responsible for the support and well-being of his natural children, as for his legitimate offspring. They often formed part of the family, received its benefits, had a share in the inheritance, and easily obtained legitimization. As Balzac wittily says, this was "l'age d'or des bâtards."

So here at Mesnil we see Guillemette presiding over the house, a quiet, gentle influence, beloved by everyone. Her brother Symonnet is much less serious, the *enfant gâté* of the family. Gilles de Gouberville had an almost doting fondness for this boy, and despite his follies and madcap pranks, made him, for many years, his constant companion.

Arnould, while less of a favourite, was the seigneur's trusted friend and, as the years pass, we see him winning his elder's confidence more and more, while Symonnet forfeits the place he once held. The reason for this we do not know, unless it was the high-spirited Symonnet's restiveness under the bar sinister and his desire for legitimization, which Gilles de Gouberville would not grant.

The remaining two boys, Jacques and Noël, held indeterminate positions in the household, between that of the servants and the family, which would lead one to suppose that they were the children, possibly, of a mother somewhat lower in the social scale.

The remaining inmate of the house was Thomas Langlois, called Cantepye, an original character, who had come to Mesnil as a youth to learn the management of an estate from the competent Gilles de Gouberville. He is a gentleman, who goes riding forth followed by his *laqué*, owns several estates, manages them, works on the land, fights in Flanders, and

defends the seigneur's honor as well as his own, on every occasion, by liberal fisticuffs plentifully distributed about the neighborhood. He represented Gilles de Gouberville constantly in his many lawsuits, and his fiery temper made him both feared and respected. He was a true Norman, adventurous and energetic, yet calculating and stingy. We find him suing his brother, the Sire de Beaumont, to recover 107 sols which he had lent him to bury their mother.

This is the household whose daily life fills the pages of the Journal. There is not a day that Symonnet or Cantepye or Lajoye is not sent on errands of business or of household import to the near-by towns. Arnould is more seldom intrusted with such missions, while Jacques and Noël are kept busy in field and stable.

Guillemette must have had her hands more than full directing the multiple household activities. With such a number to feed and care for in her family, with such a constant stream of guests, the mere preparation and cooking of the vast quantities of food consumed, must have taken many people many hours daily. Everything that was used in house or stables was produced on the estate. For the house, there was flax to prepare and thread to spin, wool to card and to spin, candles to make, lard to try, soap to make, medicines and salves, pomades and waters to compound, besides baking and brewing; there were laced and ruffled shirts to sew, *aulnes* of napkins to hem for the table, bed curtains and coverlets to embroider and fringe, though the itinerant tailor made the outer clothing for both men and women.

The manor house and courtyard woke to life soon after daylight. The master, full of vigor, was up and out after breakfast, ordering his farm servants and household. There was no detail in the running of the house or estate in which he was not interested. It was he, who, when guests were expected, sent Symonnet flying to the coast for fish, or

Arnould to commandeer game, or Lajoie to fetch wine. According to the season, he stood here in the courtyard, sending his laborers forth to field or garden, to river, sea or forest; harvesting, tilling, hedging, ditching, planting, carting, felling timber. He then mounted his horse and always accompanied by one or two attendants (Lajoie, Cantepye, Symonnet) rode out to inspect his domain, his fields, his mills, the village; a word with his favorite farmer, Thomas Drouet; a chat with the vicar. On the day of the Assizes, he was off after breakfast to Valognes to preside at the fortnightly court; to dine at midday at Denys Lorion's tavern in company with other gentlemen of the countryside; back to court for the afternoon session; then a leisurely ride home with neighbors along the highroad, down the lane and into the courtyard here; a hum and a bustle, dogs yapping, servants running to meet the master; the dismounting of a tired and satisfied man; the big kitchen, supper, where he presided over a board open to household, friend and stranger.

CHAPTER III

The Family of Gilles de Gouberville

In Gilles de Gouberville's family of four brothers and three sisters, we find a fair epitome of life in the sixteenth century. Nothing is wanting to complete a picture of the times. Gilles de Gouberville, himself, the oldest of the family, is living in his Manor of Mesnil-au-Val, with an oddly composed household, yet a man of substance, important and respected.

The second brother François Picot, Seigneur de Sorteval, was doubtless born and brought up at the Manor of Gouberville. Later, he lived in Cherbourg, probably in one of the Picot houses, of which there were several, where he led a spendthrift existence, married Marie de la Fontaine and had a son. It was not long before he disposed of his patrimony and deserted his wife and child to live with Demoiselle Anne de Sapincourt at his Manor of Sorteval on the sea, near Bayeux.

Marie de la Fontaine, on her desertion, appealed to Gilles de Gouberville for her dower rights, in which appeal she was upheld by the courts. Why she appealed to her brother-in-law, we do not know, unless he, as head of the family, held funds belonging to François. Shortly after the decision by the courts, Marie de la Fontaine came to dinner at Mesnil where she and the sire discussed the position quite amicably and from that date he paid her an annuity in money, often adding a gift of linen thread or wool. She, on her side did not ignore the French proverb, "les petits cadeaux entretiennent l'amitié," and sent her brother-in-law many an offering: "a dozen oranges and lemons and a Spanish felt" or "oranges, lemons, pomegranates and two bottles of Burgundy."

Gilles sent a summons to François at Sorteval to repay the money advanced to Marie, but he ignored the appellation.

So the redoubtable Cantepye followed, bearing an injunction from the court at Valognes. François received him with insult, swearing that

in whatever company he may find me [writes Gilles], he will kill me and that then he will be content to die himself. He seized the bag and letters from Cantepye's belt, amongst others the sentence declaring him contumacious, passed against him at Valognes, tore them up, threw them on the ground and stamping on them, declared again that *par le mort de Dieu*, he'd kill me on sight.

This ill feeling died as quickly as it was born. Gilles de Gouberville remained a friend to Marie de la Fontaine, but was, in time, on good terms with the *ménage* at Sorteval as well.

The third brother, Guillaume Picot, was a student. We know that he made the journey to Italy. The Renaissance, which carried Italian names into the plays of William Shakespeare, drew this boy from his distant Normandy manor and set him on the road to that country which was the fountain head of all sixteenth-century culture and learning. He came back to tell his tales of Rome and of the glories and enchantment of Italy to the wondering circle at the manor. He lived in Paris, one of the throng that filled the halls of learning, and in that city he died young, leaving, as a precious legacy, twelve books to Gilles de Gouberville.

To complete the picture of contemporary manners, it only needs that the fourth brother, Louis, should be, what he was, an adventurer, living by his wits and his sword. The first mention of him in the Journal is in December, 1550, when Gilles de Gouberville, who was on his way to Rouen for a lawsuit and for a cure in the house of his doctor, Monsieur Prévost stopped at Russy. "I had not seen him since Easter, 1544," he writes.

The reason for this estrangement was natural on the part of one so law-abiding as our seigneur. Louis, in company with

eight others, five of whom were gentlemen, had attacked the rich Priory of Saint-Clément de Truttemer, near Vire, and had killed the Prior, Martin de Bétheville and his chaplain. As a consequence of this act, Louis Picot and three of his accomplices were sentenced "to have the left hand cut off, then to be beheaded, their hands and heads to be affixed to the most convenient spot nearest the scene of the crime."⁵

Thanks to the clemency of François I, Louis and his friends, were pardoned, and in 1551 he sold his share of the inheritance to his brother Gilles, and vanished from the Journal — who shall doubt but on a search for further adventure? At any rate, his early death in an affray must have come as a relief to the rest of his family.

When we turn to the three sisters, we find the eldest, Gillonne, most respectably married to the Sieur de la Bigne, the King's Lieutenant at Bayeux.

We do not know Gillonne as well as the next sister, Renée, who was the wife of Jacques de Moncel, Seigneur de Saint-Naser, Captain of all the militia on the coast and Lieutenant to the Admiral of France at Cherbourg.

Renée was her brother's favorite. There was a constant interchange of presents, letters and visits between Mesnil-au-Val and Saint-Naser, about twenty-five kilometers away, where she lived. You can find the way there today along the coast road from Cherbourg to the Cap de la Hague. It runs through Querqueville, its church upon the hill, its towers surmounted by stone pyramidal spires, through Urville, where at a turn of the road you see the Manor of Dur-Ecu which has stood there since the Conquest; up the cliff by Landemer giving you a long view of the rugged coast; and then, inland to Gréville, the birthplace of the painter Millet. From here you turn to the left, down a very narrow country road and drive on for about a mile, till on your right you see a line of tall hemlocks and a rounding stone entrance wall holding a

gate to a straight-walled avenue of beeches. If you walk down it, you see that it continues straight on to another entrance into another road, and halfway between the two, you find on your left the wide courtyard of the manor.

The old stone barns, with their heavy rounded doorways, stand on the right side of the courtyard, and here on the left is the manor house with its round turret, a niche above the entrance door holding a tiny *Sainte Vierge* whose robe flutters in the breeze. The place is all closed and locked, but so well kept and tended that you feel that the farmer who lives here, and who is probably away at market with his wife, holds it in affection.⁶

As you stand in the courtyard looking up at the windows, you wonder which was the room where Madame de Saint-Naser spread upon her ample bed, those "wedding sheets of silk" for which her brother paid thirty livres at Valognes. Here the bon sire came riding in, followed by his servant, Lajoie, laden with a bottle or two of red wine and the choicest fruit of the Mesnil garden. So robust a gentleman must have had a lusty voice to wake the courtyard and announce his coming to the lady, who would appear at that turret door, with the little Gillonne, who, having no brothers, was the seigneur's heir, and was to become herself one day, Dame de Russy, Gouberville and Mesnil-au-Val.

Tassine, the remaining sister, like her brother François, was a scandal in the family. We do not find how or where she was brought up. She is unmarried when we meet with her in the Journal, which is seldom. She never takes any part in the frequent reunions at Mesnil-au-Val, nor is she present at the marriage of her half-sister Guillemette, nor at the sire's birthday parties on Saint Gilles' Day. She seems to have lived at the Manor Des Essarts, in the Bessin, near Russy. There are several entries which mention her name between May and October, 1558, when on several occasions

Gilles de Gouberville rode over to see her at Essarts. One gives us a picture: the seigneur mounted on his *haquenée*, his servant in attendance, the lady mounted by his side, followed by the Essarts' lackey leading a white colt that her brother had just given her, a pleasant little cavalcade riding through the October woods in the afternoon light and arriving at sunset at the Manor Des Essarts, where they found "the Sieur des Essarts in the garden, by the pond, where the servants were gathering apples." Lolif, whoever he was, was in the house; whether a son or cousin or friend of des Essarts, we do not know, but he was certainly des Essarts' rival in the affections of Tassine.

Gilles de Gouberville spent that night at the manor, and the next day he and des Essarts had a long talk, walking up and down the garden "for two hours before dinner" in close conversation, whose subject we know when Gilles de Gouberville adds: "he said that he wished to marry my sister Tassine." This sentence is written in Greek characters.

Up to this time her brother had apparently found no fault with Tassine's residence at the Manor Des Essarts. But by the following spring the situation had changed. It appears that Tassine, unmarried, was living at the manor of the man by whose name her brother already called her.

It was in 1560, just after his uncle's death, when Gilles de Gouberville was at Russy, that "my sister des Essarts" stopped to see him there. She spent that night at Russy and the next day as she prepared to return to Essarts, her brother appealed to her, begging her to come back and live with him.

I told her she could no longer honestly remain at Essarts, seeing that the mother and the wife of the Sieur des Essarts were both dead, and that there was a bad opinion of her abroad because she had stopped there so long, and that if she refused to take my advice, and remained obstinate and disobedient, I should leave her without help. I spoke thus to her in the presence of the Sieur de Bucaille, Mlle de Sorteval

and her sister, Lajoie, Thoysnet, Charlot Brucan, Olivier Dancel and de Brillevast. When I appealed to her before at Essarts, she replied that she would rather serve the poorest gentleman in Normandy, than live with me. Today she replied that it was rather late and that she had not come to stay.

By Mademoiselle de Sorteal, the sire means the lady, Anne de Sapincourt, who was living with his brother at Sorteal. An odd witness to his appeal to his sister for a better way of life.

Two years pass before we hear another word of Tassine. "February 1562 — On returning home, I found my sister des Essarts, the Sieur de Lolif, one of the daughters of La Bucaille and several other persons." All this party slept at Mesnil-au-Val and spent the next day, Sunday, there, "the rain having kept my sister Tassine and all her company."

Two days later Tassine and her gay party returned to Mesnil on their way back to the Bessin. She slept the night in peace, but in the morning

I summoned my sister Tassine by the Sergeant, bidding her to remain with me, offering to fulfill every office of a good brother. Present Saint-Samson, Michel le Brisses and Hubert Chandeleur. . . .

After dinner, as she prepared to leave, I forbid her going and begged her not to leave my house against my will. I said that if she would remain with me I would promise to do all that the law human and divine commands a brother to do for his sister and I told her that if she refused to accept my offer, I would do nothing more for her. Present were those above and the Cure de Touraville, Sainte-Marguerite de Nehou, Gilles Auvrey, and François Gerard, all in the kitchen here. . . .

The same day, in spite of my offers, my sister mounted her horse and rode away with her companions, except Lolif who did not dare to leave with her, because of the protests I had made as well against him as others.

That is the last word that we have in the Journal of Mademoiselle Tassine. But quite enough to interest us. Of one thing we may be sure, that she was as self-willed as her brother, and had much of his charm, for she was always surrounded by

friends. Strangely enough, we have learnt through papers found in the muniment room of the Château de Saint-Pierre-Église, that she finally married the Sieur des Essarts and so ended her gay, and to her brother, disconcerting career. But why did she wait for so many years? Was the Sieur Lolif another aspirant and could she not decide between them? In any case, she is a very live figure, as we see her flout her brother's good advice and mount and ride away.

There was another, quite impeccable, member of his family for whom Gilles de Gouberville had a great affection, the lady whom he calls "ma nièce de Cresnays."

His mother, that charming Jeanne Du Fou, had married as her first husband Gilles de Belleval and had a daughter Jeanne — our Gilles' half-sister — whose daughter married François de Crux, Sieur de Cresnays. They lived both at Cresnays and at the Manor of Montfarville, on the sea near Barfleur, where the seigneur often visited them. On January 24, 1554, he writes:

before dinner the son of the Sieur de Cresnays and my niece was baptized. I gave him the name of Gilles. The Sieur de Crux and Mademoiselle de Cuve were the other godfather and godmother. There were many gentlemen and ladies present, some of whom I did not know. After dinner I gave the sage-femme and the nurse of my little godson, each 11 sols.

The baby Gilles had a sister named Jacqueline to whom the Sire de Gouberville also stood as sponsor, as he did to his small niece Gillonne, the daughter of Madame de Saint-Naser. In fact he was the popular godfather of the countryside, and we often see him acting in this character for the children of his neighbors and villagers.

It is interesting to know that the baby Gilles married his cousin Gillonne and that the Journal was in the possession of their direct descendants. One believes that Sire Gilles de Gouberville would be rather pleased could he know that

it is through the line of his beloved sister Renée and his favorite "nièce de Cresnays" that he has been saved from oblivion, to find many posthumous acquaintances and friends far removed from him in time and outlook.

CHAPTER IV

Friends and Neighbors

After our introduction to the household and family of Gilles de Gouberville, it may be as well to emphasize the fact that he was of standing in the country and connected by ties of blood or marriage with many of the great families of the Cotentin, with whom he was on most friendly terms.

There was his brother-in-law, Sieur de Saint-Naser, Lieutenant to the Admiral and head of all the militia on the coast, at whose house he found a constant welcome; there were his cousins, the Tocquevilles, at their Manor of Tocqueville, where he often stopped for dinner or supper on his way to Gouberville, and who held an annual family reunion, after the mass which was celebrated by the Sire de Russey, Curé of Gouberville, in the church of Gouberville on the feast of its patron saint; the Fermanvilles on their property near the sea at Barfleur; the Brettevilles in their Manor of Bricqueville, close to Cherbourg; and the Cresnays at Montfarville.

If you drive today from Cherbourg to Mesnil, you may take the main Barfleur road as far as the village of Tourlaville, where you will turn off on a country road and there, half a mile along, upon your right, you will notice old farm buildings and a wall with a high stone entrance, bearing an escutcheon. This is the Manor of Flouettes, where the Sieur Trésorier La Guette lived. His seems to have been the only family, amongst all his friends and acquaintances, which the bon sire really dislikes; whenever their name occurs in the diary it is with a slur, and the description of La Guette's funeral is not without malice. We can picture the scene as we stop at the great gate, reading the entry for December 10, 1556.

Today the service was held at Tournlaville for the late Sieur Trésorier La Guette and the banquet was at Flouettes which the said Seigneur has left to (his brother) Gilles Dancel, with the fief farm and property at Tournlaville. This Dancel drove the poor with blows [*grands coups de baston*] from the door of Flouettes. Only *liards* were given to the poor and as many as five hundred poor received nothing. Besides that, the men who had tolled the bell at Tournlaville from midday yesterday till today, without stopping, were far from satisfied, as Dancel said that they were supposed to ring gratis. Only twelve of the poor were given clothing. Thomas La Guette, Vicomte de Valognes, brother of the defunct Sieur, assisted at the service and the obsequies. He gave neither *denier* nor *maille* to the poor [the obsequies were at Dancel's expense], but presented double ducats to the children of his nieces. Present also, at the obsequies, were the young Curé de Cherbourg, the Captain of that place, Pierres Jenne, husband of a deceased niece, the Sieur de Bretteville and the husband of a deceased sister. The rest were only bourgeois of Cherbourg, his allies, and a few other people.

The following day "There was another service at Gonneville for the Sieur La Guette, at which they obliged the poor who were clothed yesterday at Tournlaville, to be present." That is, instead of giving clothing to twelve other poor of Gonneville, who, with the new clothing, would take the duties of following the hearse.

Here, where the car stands, the five hundred poor, surging around the great door, received blows instead of the expected largesse, while the bon sire looked on sardonically and then walked home across the Tournlaville fields to enter his description in his book.

From Flouettes, you can see, on the hill, the square tower of the Church of Notre Dame de Tournlaville, where that passing bell was tolled without ceasing for twenty-four hours. Climbing up there, you find a wide view from the church steps over the bay and the ocean, the town of Cherbourg and the coast all the way to the Cap de la Hague. It is pleasant to loiter under the trees, in the shelter of the wind-beaten walls. It was here that the bon sire sometimes came

to Vespers and played at bowls with his team from Mesnil against the men of Tournlaville. Here, too, came for mass those ill-starred children, Marguerite and Julian de Ravalet, the sister and brother whose story was to bring to the Château de Tournlaville such tragic renown.⁷

From the church it is but a moment to the Château de Tournlaville, which is today a *monument historique*. It was originally the fief farm spoken of in the Journal, which was later given by Charles IX to the Abbé de Hambye. The abbé, in his dignity and devotion to his family, was a perfect type of the Norman aristocrat. He was a man of profound learning, a keen lover of beauty, endowed with great gifts and full of spiritual fervor. He drew the plans for his château, and was his own architect, assisted by those excellent master builders who traveled the roads of Anjou and Touraine, of Poitou and Normandy, ready in that time of eager building, to undertake whatever work might come to their hand. The abbé also enlisted the help of his neighbors, and the Sire de Gouberville sent men and carts from Mesnil to aid in the toil of amassing the materials for the new construction.

The château stands above a quiet valley through whose rich meadowland meanders the small river Trottebec (trout beck), the stream for whose care the parishioners of Mesnil were summonsed occasionally from the pulpit after mass of a Sunday. The road, which continues to the crossroads at Digoville, where Brucan Manor stands, and on to Mesnil, was often followed by the Curé of Tournlaville who was a great friend and crony of Gilles de Gouberville.

All these friends and relatives were to the west of Mesnil, more or less centered about Cherbourg, which was then a walled town, its gates closed at sundown and opened at sunrise, an important and fortified port and the market center for the Mesnil household. To Cherbourg the Sire de Gouberville rode several times weekly. The Captain of Cherbourg, in

command at the château, was his great friend, with whom he passed many hours in talk. At one time he had a room in the château filled with his own furniture. In Cherbourg, too, were the butcher, the baker, the wine merchant and, not least, the tavern of Robine de La Mer, much frequented by a merry company.

Valognes was the town to which, alternatively with Cherbourg, Sieur Gilles or one of his family rode almost daily. Out of the Mesnil lane to the left, we may follow the road they so often traveled. It is little used in these days, but in the seigneur's time it was the main road from Paris to Cherbourg, which accounts for the constant stream of visitors which amazes us in the Journal. A kilometer before you reach Valognes, you will see on your left the old grey Château de Chiffrevast and you recall the name of the Sire de Gouberville's friend, the Sieur de Cyffrevast, a rich landowner, for whom he had a great regard. The property remained in the family until the Revolution, when the last of the name, François Antoine Henri Danneville de Chiffrevast, Colonel of Dragoons, was guillotined in Paris. But the château still stands, valiant on its rise in the wooded park.

At Valognes we are in the heart of the Cotentin; for, though Saint-Lô is the *chef-lieu*, Valognes is geographically more truly its center and was the focus of its life from early days until the Revolution wiped out the whole social fabric, as a sponge passed over a slate.

In the sixteenth century, Valognes was the seat of justice, its château boasted a governor and a garrison, and here Gilles de Gouberville met his friends; here were his barber and bootmaker; and here he held the fortnightly court, *les haults jours*, as the session was called.

There is nothing left of the Château de Valognes, of which we have constant mention in the early days of the Journal, when the sire sent countless presents of woodcock and part-

ridge to the children of the governor, the Comte de Tende, or to their tutor, M. de Heurtebye. It was razed to the ground in 1689 and nothing is left of it but its name, in the Place du Château.

There is today a melancholy charm in Valognes's deserted streets; in the church of Saint Malo on the hill, with its curious Gothic dome, and in the noble private hotels, once gay with the brilliance of the eighteenth century. Here all the great families of the Cotentin had their town houses, and it is in them that the past glory of Valognes remains enshrined. In the Rue de Pelouze is the finest of them, the Hôtel de Beaumont, with its Ionic columns, its exquisite wrought-iron balconies, its galleries, its gardens and terraces. In the Rue Carnot, at number 25, is the Hôtel de Thieuville, from which Marguerite de Ravalet fled from her husband at midnight on horseback, dressed as a man, headed for the scaffold. In the Rue de Welléat, 9, is the house of the Goubervilles; 11, the Touffrevilles; 13, the Chivrés; 16, the Grimmonières. In every street you find them, these silent old mansions, closed, sightless, restrained, trying to forget the day of their humiliation, when, their noble owners banished or dead, their riches were turned out upon the pavement — furniture, silver, linen, books, *bibelots*, papers — exposed to the curiosity of the crowd and sold to the highest bidder. As there were few towns outside Paris where the aristocracy was more arrogant; more insolent; more extravagant in the luxury of their equipages, their clothes, their houses; more audacious in their gallantries; more indifferent to opinion than Valognes; so there were few places where the Revolution took a more ferocious revenge.

Not far from Valognes, Gilles de Gouberville would pass by Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, a place that pleases today by the charm of its site and the fine church and château that remain. Here he would be received by his friend, Damoysselle de la Lande, Dame de Saint-Poys, who would offer him a glass of

wine, which he does not forget to record. As in this instance, it was the custom to use the title *Damoyselle* and the maiden name before the husband's name.

From Saint-Sauveur it was an easy ride to Bricquebec, where the great lady of the countryside lived in state. Her full title was Marie d'Estouteville, Duchesse de Nevers, Baronne de Bricquebec and Comtesse de Saint-Pol. She had her apartments at court, where she was often in attendance. Jean de Ravalet, Abbé de Hambye, who built the Château de Tourlaville, was her secretary. This lady kept an *équipage de chasse* which hunted the country as far as Digoville. That our seigneur prized her friendship may be gathered from the constant presents of game or fruit that he sent to her ladyship. She received him graciously "in the gallery amongst her ladies," and he stopped to dinner, eating at the "*table du conseil*," but whether that was an honor or otherwise, I do not know. I rather think it was, as he had a weakness, I feel, for recording in his diary that which might redound to his credit. I may do him an injustice. Yet it is a trait which only makes him the more human.

Between Valognes and Cherbourg rises the forest of Brix, where Gilles de Gouberville had the right to "the green wood which has fallen and the dry; and to all eggs of wild birds in all seasons and pasturage for beasts at all times except the month of May." A good road will take you up, with many windings by field and copse, to the little town of Brix, where you will get a wide view over all the country round. This, curiously enough, was the cradle of the Bruces; their château, here, was destroyed in 1215, before ever there was a Bruce in Scotland.

From the Journal, you will repeople this small empty square. Here on market day came the seigneur and his men with cattle to sell; here Symonnet, the hunter, on his way home after a good day in the woods, rested to drink a bowl

of cider, his dogs at his feet; here Matignon, the Catholic chief, halted his men for a respite before descending on the Huguenots at Valognes. And always the Virgin, in the niche up there in the gable of the church, looked down as she does today and smiled. No, not quite always. She lost her head in the Revolution, but it was found, after many years, in a château garden, brought back and replaced. So, again she smiles.

The Manor of Russy

We may remember that Gilles de Gouberville's grandfather left half his estate to his son, Jean de Gouberville, comprising the Manors of Russy, Saint-Honorine, Grandval and Colleville in the Bessin.

The Bessin is the old departmental division of Normandy which adjoins the Cotentin, and whose *chef-lieu* is Caen. The general character of the country is more broken and picturesque, more wooded and romantic, than that of the Cotentin. Here, near the sea, a few miles to the northwest of Bayeux, is the commune of Russy. But the search for the old Manor of Russy was less successful than that for Mesnil-au-Val.

We followed the way that the bon sire always took, from Valognes to Lestre, where he stopped at the château of his friend, the Sieur de Lestre, before going on across the ferry at the Grand-Vay, through Carentan and Isigny, to arrive, on his good horse, at Russy some nine hours after leaving Mesnil. The time they made on their journeys proves that the horses of the Cotentin in that day were worthy sires of the great breed of Anglo-Normans that are to be seen on the famous stud farms today.

There was no village at Russy; so we inquired for the mayor of the commune, and, following directions, arrived at the gate of a neat new farmhouse. The mayor was absent, but his dog received us so warmly that a servant, followed by her mistress, rushed to meet us and led us into her bright kitchen. She had never heard of a Gouberville. She knew no Manor of Russy. But she advised us to go to the school and inquire there.

Plunging down a romantic hill and mounting another, we stopped at a group of three buildings, one of which was the

school, and walked up through a grass-grown yard to the door. A very young girl came out at the sound of our footsteps, a few small craning heads peering from behind her. She wished to be obliging, but she had never heard the name of Gouberville, nor did she know any Manor of Russy. Would we, however, like to look at the archives? The school-house was also the *mairie* of the commune.

She led us through a committee room, its whitewashed walls bearing the usual pictures of Clemenceau, Foch, and Poincaré, to a small anteroom beyond, lined with brown, painted shelves, stuffed with a mass of papers. The girl began aimlessly drawing out large, thin parchment-covered books, which proved to be the complete town records, year by year, for the early seventeenth century, a mine of amusing, perhaps valuable information; tempting, indeed, but, though we glanced through many yellowed pages, void of the names we sought. The June afternoon was drawing drowsily shorter and we wanted to get back to Mesnil and to Cherbourg for the night. But could we leave without finding the manor?

We took the little school-teacher into our confidence. We introduced her to the Sire de Gouberville, to his day and his family, and we asked her if she knew no old manor in the commune of Russy which had survived since the sixteenth century. She thought for a moment and then exclaimed that it must be the *Manoir du Fresnes*. It was very ancient, and we had but to mount the hill by the church, go over the top, then down, and turn to the left, and we should see the gate.

The tower of the church rose above us, as we drove up the steep way. In the afternoon light we walked in the sleepy Russy churchyard, beneath great elms, between old yews, in deep grass, amongst half-buried stones; there was beauty, peace and quiet, but no trace here of any name we sought. We turned from it reluctantly, to drive on slowly, until, as we had been promised, we saw before us the ruin of a fine, lofty,

triple-arched gateway, leading to farm buildings. Above the central arch was a defaced escutcheon.

We went in and were met by the farmer's wife, who was ignorant of all but the fact that the vicomte, her landlord, liked the old gate and would not have it demolished, which was a trial, as it was not wide enough for the passage of a new reaping machine. The kitchen, the buildings around the vast farmyard, showed traces of old work, but were without charm or any vestige of beauty.

Was this the manor where Jean de Gouberville lived? Which Gilles de Gouberville inherited? Where Tassine visited, and François and Anne de Sapincourt came so often from their Manor of Sorteval, a few miles away, at the sea? We think it is, but we do not know. Du Fresnes was the name of close cousins of Gilles de Gouberville who were often at the Manor of Russy. It might be that they inherited the property and gave it their name; but that is conjecture.

Gilles' uncle, Jean de Gouberville, Sire de Russy, was an important land owner, a careful, intelligent administrator, who maintained a large establishment at his manor. He had taken orders and was Curé of Gouberville and of Menesqueville, near Evreux; to both parishes, he had appointed vicars who performed his religious duties in return for a small stipend, while he took all the revenues. He lived at Russy, in the midst of a large household, with a servant or housekeeper, Marguerite Le Berger, who was his mistress and the mother of his three children, Isabeau, Thomine and Antoine. The girls held the position of domestics at the manor, but the boy was sent away to school.

We have one letter remaining from the Sire de Russy to his newpew, Gilles de Gouberville.

My nephew, I have no one to send to look over the horses for me. Were it not that Marguerite is ill, I should go myself. If you can find one that would please me, you may invest some money in it. It is

well that a horse should not be too young, because, then, if you don't like it, you can easily get rid of it. Marguerite found your beer very good and thanks you for it. She sends her remembrances and praying God, my nephew, to keep you in health; from Russy, this XXVIII day of October,

Your uncle and friend,

DE GOUBERVILLE

There was constant communication between the households of Russy and Mesnil-au-Val, a coming and going of masters and of servants with messages and gifts. Gilles de Gouberville felt respect and deference for his uncle, as head of the house, and affection for him, as a near relative.

In September, 1560, a messenger arrived one night at Mesnil bringing word of his uncle's sudden seizure. Stricken with grief at the news, Gilles mounted, and riding posthaste, reached Russy the next morning at ten.

I found my uncle dying, speechless and *in extremis*; those in the room were my brother François and the servants of the house and the servants from Saint-Honorine. Soon after I entered the room, my sister Tassine Des Essarts arrived and the Sieur de Lohoberaye. About a half hour before midday, my uncle rendered his soul to God. All day I did not move from the house. I was more unhappy than I have ever been. After dinner we looked in his chest where he is accustomed to keep his money, but we found in gold only eighty double ducats and one simple ducat, a *noble à la rose* and one hundred and twenty *écus soleil*, his signet weighing six and a half *écus* and a small ring set with a piece of licorne.

Thursday, XII. My uncle was buried in the church of Russy, in the presence of the Sieurs Duclos, de Lohoberaye, Gefosse, Tournières, Le Quesnay, Carpiquet and our cousins, de Grandval and Dufresne. . . . [Then, in Greek characters] The lady whom my brother calls his wife and her sister came from Sorteval, where they have been living (with him) for about three years.

Cantepye and the vicar, Messire Eustache Plantard, distributed the alms (*la donnée*) to the poor at the church door, not at the door of the manor as in all the other instances in the diary, probably because of the deceased's office as curé,

rather than as seigneur. We trust that, for the honor of the house, the coin were *deniers*, not *liards*.

Gilles de Gouberville presided at the banquet, and notes

the Dufresne cousins did not remain to dinner; all the rest of the company remained, as well as many other persons.

Friday, XIII. Before dinner and after we went through our papers. I asked my brother to pay all the expenses and that we would arrange together after; I was so sad that I could not bear any more.

During the next three days, masses were said in the Russy church for the repose of the soul of the late master, and friends came to pay their visits of condolence to the manor; but by Tuesday, Gilles and François were busy dividing the property left to them jointly, the household effects and the stock; one took the gray mare and one the gray *haquenée*; one had two bay colts, one two gray colts, etc. The next day Cantepye came back from Bayeux with the tailor to make them their mourning; then in the proper habiliments of woe, the brothers finished the division of furniture, linen, wool and kitchen utensils, before going on to the further division of the harvest, in grange or still standing.

They had their uncle's man of affairs, Samson, to help them, who continued to have charge of the business of the Russy estate until 1562, when he proved himself untrustworthy and was dismissed. Gilles de Gouberville installed two trusted bailiffs at Russy: Charles Brucan, his boyhood friend, and Guyon Le Long.

Many years after Jean de Gouberville's death, his son Antoine procured his legitimization and ennoblement by papers which are still extant and which, after outlining the Gouberville lineage, continue as follows:

and of this Jean, priest, and Marguerite Le Berger, was issue Antoine de Russy, Sieur de la Quiéze. Having examined the papers of the genealogy of this de Russy, the Court with the consent of the Procureur Général du Roi, accords to the said de Russy, the right . . . to be main-

tained in his titles and quality of noble, according to the edict of His Majesty, of the month of March, 1600, and that he may live as a noble without derogation.

Antoine de Russy married and had three sons, of whom one became ambassador to Holland under Henri IV; the second, gentleman in waiting to the king; the third, chamberlain.

Such legitimizations were frequent. Monsieur de Mauldes writes, "we have found in the registers that remain of the reign of Louis XII, a dozen cases of the legitimization of the sons of priests, nearly all of distinguished origin." The daughters did not fare so well, although they were given dowries which enabled them to marry.

Our bon sire was now Sire de Russy, Saint-Honorine, Grandval and Colleville, and was obliged to pass many weeks at a time in the Bessin, where his life was a counterpart of that at Mesnil. Bayeux was the market town for the Russy household and it became as familiar to him as Valognes or Cherbourg. There he found his sister, Madame de la Bigne, and received the hospitality of her house; there he met many friends and relations; the Du Hommes, the d'Orglandes, the Sieur de Magneville, Baron de La Haye-du-Puits, the Chevalier Jean de Pierrepont, Seigneur d'Estienville and many more. Here, too, he had his man of law, as well as at Rouen and Caen which were also within the radius of this new center. But, although he fulfilled the duties of his new position, he did not know the Bessin as he knew the Cotentin, and he was always delighted to get back to Mesnil-au-Val, which was home.

How They Lived and Dressed

When our sixteenth-century gentleman had built his manor after the plan of M. Estienne; when, as at Mesnil, he had placed the round stone balls upon his gateposts and had added a lovely Gothic chapel, such as here exists, to his house, his barns, his grange, his sheds and his folds; when it was all complete, even to the gardens beyond that led to orchard and field, he still had to think of his house furnishing.

Gilles de Gouberville gives us many a side light on this, although from the absence of any note on the purchase of the main articles of furniture, we gather that his was one of those old houses well provided with solid pieces which were inherited and which defied the years, sparing their owner the need of renewal.

We have a very good idea of that interior. The great kitchen was the center of the life of the house, although at Mesnil there seems to have been another large living room at a time when that was exceptional. "*D'avoir deux salles, cela tient du grand.*" This *salle*, however, was used only for feasts and dancing at harvest time and other merrymakings.

The kitchen was the place where the household congregated and lived. What a picture of comfort, what a welcome it offered to the traveler who, on an autumn night, turned in at those gates, crossed the courtyard and mounted the eight steps to its door. There on the andirons of the huge chimney a fire would be burning, of green logs with plenty of dry faggots to make it hot and lasting. The fireplace was, moreover, furnished with every kind of crane and spit. The hanging iron pot would be bubbling, the spit slowly turning before the flames. The fire, to which the wanderer would draw near, never went out. The flint and steel were kept in a tinder box

upon the chimney piece, but the fire was carefully banked and kept alight from day to day. It was so difficult to strike a spark and conserve it that, if the fire, by rare neglect, did go out, it was easier to send to a neighbor for live coals than to try to make one's own.

For light, candles would be burning on the dresser and on the long narrow oak tables, for though Gilles de Gouberville possessed an oil lamp at Russy, there were only candles at Mesnil. It was at this very date that Thomas Tusser was admonishing the English housewife,

Wife, make thine own candle
Spare penny to handle.
Provide for thy tallow ere frost cometh in,
And make thy own candles ere Winter begin.

Candle making was autumn work, when the hives of the bees, which were kept as much for their wax as for their honey, yielded the year's store. Guillemette and her maids could easily make two hundred candles in a day, either those with wicks, in candle molds, or the common rushlights, which were made by stripping the bark from rushes and dipping them in melted tallow. A goodly store they would have to provide and lay away in the dark, against the long winter months.

Inside the great fireplace was the mouth of the bake oven, built of brick. There early in the morning a fire of dry wood was made and kept going until the bricks were heated, when it was cleared out and the loaves, worked into spongy dough in the great kneading trough in the corner, would be slipped in on a long-handled shovel to bake in the even heat until they were crisp and brown, when they were placed in the oak bread cupboard hanging on the wall.

Down the center of the room stood the tables, those for the family and the guests and those for the servants, with straw beneath, where the dogs lay ready for any morsel that might come their way. Wooden benches served as seats for

the company, although there would be a large comfortable chair of oak, cushioned, for the master in the place of honor, and possibly two or three other chairs as well.

Above the chimney piece in the sixteenth-century kitchen, as in the farmhouse kitchen of a later day in England or New England, hung the firearms, the arquebus and the bows and arrows. Near the door, as you entered, were the antlers on the wall for caps and whips, leashes, hunting horns and the big rosary for the Pater Noster. In one corner stood the perch for the falcons, with the nets and fishing tackle below.

In the middle of one side wall was the dresser holding the coppers and the pewter vessels, which would give back the light of the fire from their bright surfaces. When the pewter dishes became damaged or worn, they were melted down and recast. The Sire de Russey on his death left seventy-six pounds of pewter vessels which Gilles de Gouberville exchanged at Valognes, one sol on each pound, for new. The courtyard must have resounded on the days when the visiting copper-smith from Valognes came to repair the copper. At that date Valognes was as great a center of work in copper as Villedieu is today, and the coppersmiths exercised their noisy trade in a street which was known by their name down to quite recent years.

With such a supply of pewter, it is probable that it was used for plates on the master's table; though the wooden trencher, from which one or more people ate, was still in common use in England. Forks there were none, which made the napkins very necessary, and the Journal is filled with such notes as this: "Denys Quentin brought me twenty yards of linen for napkins." Knives there were, and spoons made of horn, wood and pewter and, what was rare in England, the seigneur's table boasted glass. This was made at the little town of Brix, which we have visited. It was probably thick and greenish. He notes: "Noel brought back a dozen glasses";

and another day he says, "I went to the glass maker's at Brix and ordered them to make three glass flagons which I shall have on Saturday." These flagons were probably bottles, as he speaks of carrying a dozen flagons of wine on one of his journeys. Once he returns the bottles ordered "because the corks were not well made." He had his flagons made to order and he then sent them to be covered with leather; sometimes, even, with gilded leather. It was from this same glass maker at Brix that he got the alembics for use in the making of spirits.

These glassworks are no more. But at Saulsemesnil, where the sire so often went to order jars and pots for Mesnil, the industry is still carried on by families who bear the names mentioned in the Journal.

It is of interest to us, living in this age of the ready-made, to read of a day when nothing came from the general provider, but when everything that was needed in the household was produced in the neighborhood.

If we could see the supper table as our traveler saw it, it would present little likeness to that of a country gentlemen today. A high saltcellar in the middle, loaves of bread, rough pewter dishes heaped with food, jugs of cider, pewter cups; no china, no silver, no covered dishes. This from the point of view of service was simple, as there was nothing breakable, nothing of value, and nothing to make extra work.

Gilles de Gouberville, who, in the furnishing of his manor as in much else, was ahead of his time, owned a clock; as he mentions sending Symonnet for Rouxel, the gunsmith at Digo-ville, to come and mend it, its works were evidently of metal, not of wood.

Where, we would like to know, did he place the small chest which came to him by boat from Rouen? And his little ivory coffer, "*mon petit coffre d'ivoire*"? And his little cabinet which he valued so much that he had it moved out on a cart

from his room in Cherbourg to Mesnil-au-Val? I think in his bedroom. There, too, he had an *armoïre*, the first mentioned anywhere at that date, as they were not commonly made in Normandy till the reign of Louis XIII.

The second floor of the manor was given to the bedrooms, each vast in size and lofty, with oak beams, stone floors and huge chimneys for a fire in case of extreme cold or illness. The most noticeable thing about the rooms was the size and comfort of the beds. Not one bed to each bedroom, either, but two or three, or sometimes as many as five. A room of one's own is a very modern idea. In that day you shared your bedroom with your guest or even with the stranger. Moreover there was no squeamishness about sharing the same bed. Noël du Fail, a century later, writes: "It is only since every one has become evil-minded, in our country of France, that every one must have his own bed distinct and apart."

So, there must have been much doubling up in those wide and spacious beds, when as sometimes happened, the Lieutenant Général and Madame de la Bigne with all their company from Bayeux, and Tassine and her company from Essarts, arrived on the same day. What a haven of refuge those beds must have been from the cold in winter! Their furnishing and adornment was one of the few luxuries of our country gentleman. In the inventories of the period we find such descriptions as the following:

bed with four posts and a panel of wood, provided with mattresses, pillows, a blanket of white wool, a canopy of tapestry with a yellow background fringed with green, white and yellow, with curtains of red, green and yellow serge; a second, the bedstead of oak carved and with posts, garnished with pillows, counterpane and a cover of tapestry with beasts and foliage on a yellow ground, a canopy of tapestry also with birds and foliage on a yellow ground, a headboard covered with the same, and curtains of red, white and green serge.

Another was hung with "blue and white satin from Bruges in

Flanders"; while a fourth was adorned with crimson satin embroidered in gold thread.

Gilles de Gouberville had a further refinement, for he writes on a day in June (after a heavy dinner and a visit from his aunt), "I went to bed between the sheets to sleep," at a time when sheets were very little used.

In addition to the beds, the furniture in the chambers was limited to a stool, a table, a *chaise de nécessité*, with a pair of candlesticks on the chimney, a pair of andirons in the fireplace, and chests — many chests — those elaborately carved chests of the Renaissance, deep, wide and capacious, with heavy locks.

The Archives Nationales have preserved for us the contents of one such chest of the period, being the wardrobe of Jean Jusserand, Seigneur de Laire;

Velvet cloak

Leather cape, with a collar of marten

Pair of velvet hose

Short satin cloak trimmed with taffeta

Cape of buff leather

Doublet of velvet

Doublet of slashed taffeta

Doublet of black satin

Pair of black hose

Toque of black velvet

Pair of boots and two pairs of pumps

Casque covered with green velvet

Cuirass

As we shall see, our seigneur was even better supplied. He tells us the names of his garments and the stuff of which they are made and where he gets them. He gives us a full-length sartorial portrait of a country gentleman of his time.

We will begin with the garment which is the foundation of

all, the shirt. According to ancient and honorable usage, he changed it every Sunday.

Sunday, December 7, 1556 — The Curé of Cherbourg passed by here, going to Cherbourg, to the wedding of the nephew of his vicar. He found me in bed, just putting on my white shirt.

Of shirts there is much talk. "Gave to La Marchande for two days that she was making my shirts, 12 deniers." And the next day, "to Jacqueline Feuillye and to Françoise Pyvain, for three days that they were here making my shirts, to each one 18 deniers"; so a seamstress gained 6 deniers a day. In his notes of 1561, we find: "I bought from a mercer at Tocqueville-en-Bocage, some lace to put on the shirts that Jacqueline and Guillemine are making for me, 4 sols." At the same time he buys from the same mercer, "some needles for a sou to give to the seamstresses and women of the house." Finally he gives Cantepye "a yard of fine linen (some of that I had brought from Russy) to make ruffles for the shirts that he is having made." It was probably for the ruffles that the lace was bought. Later he speaks of having one Thomas teach Michelle how to make flat and round hemstitching for the shirts.

Many of the materials that he mentions are impossible to identify now. Such is *cresel*, from which his nightshirts are made.

Stockings are never mentioned, for the good reason that hose were worn, taking the place of trousers and stockings, being of one piece from waist to ankle. They were made of many materials. He orders them, for himself, of taffeta, of velvet, of satin, of *estamet* (a fine woolen material) and of *droquet*, a heavier, more serviceable stuff. He has them lined sometimes with black, sometimes with the scarlet cloth of England. Symonnet has them of white cloth, of scarlet and of yellow, as befitting his youth. They both wear a kind of top hose, either of leather or of heavy cloth, probably to protect

the hose from rubbing against the saddle. Once he mentions socks, which were probably worn over the hose inside the boot. With the hose was worn the doublet, or *pourpoint*. He has one of black satin lined with black; and another lined with his favorite scarlet. The doublets for Cantepye and Symonnet for ordinary wear, and for those of inferior condition, were made of heavy linen or canvas. He also mentions both *casaque* and *casquin*.

March 28, 1558 — Cantepye and Symonnet were at Cherbourg. They brought back freize to line a black *casaque*.

Of the first we read: "All this week Nicolas Moulin and his man have been working here with Françoise Pyvain, to make a pair of hose, a *pourpoint* and a *casaque*." Later the same ambulant tailor returns "to lower the collar of my *casaque*, which is too high." He sends to Cherbourg "for trimming for my *casquin*." But there is another garment which we cannot identify, called a *soye*. It must have been an elegant garment, to judge from the materials used. It was made of velvet, and he mentions that "Thomas Girard spent part of the day here, making a border of silk on my *soye*." He was particular about the cut of his clothes and we read:

I went to Valognes, to Estienne Trouard to change a cloak and a *soye* that he had made, which did not please me. We could not come to an agreement.

However, he was not discouraged and returned and "took a *soye* and a black cloak with a velvet collar." He has a *soye* made for Cantepye, "who went to Valognes to buy velvet for the border." The *soye* was also made in colored stuffs. "Françoise Lorion showed me some purple material that the Vicomtesse had given to her husband to make a *soye*."

Everyone, without distinction, seems to have worn the garments described; there was doubtless only a difference in the quality of the material. But there was one garment that

he calls a *robe*, which was for his own use. The first entry suggested that it might have been the uniform of his office as Lieutenant des Eaux et Forêts, but in that case it would always have been of the same color and material, which it was not.

"March 1, 1555 Thomas Girard with two aids came today to make me a *robe of droquet*." The next day "the furrier at Valognes came here with fur for it. I paid the furrier for the trouble that he had taken on the *robe* that he is lining with fur and for two days work, 25 sols."

He had another in 1559, also of *droquet*, and for this, Lajoie had been to Valognes, "to find a furrier to make me cuffs of wolfskin for my robe." Six lengths of white interlining and two wolf skins were used for this robe. Gilles de Gouberville paid the furrier one hundred sols for the interlining, the wolf skins and three days' work. Again in 1559,

the furrier arrived as wet as it was possible to be. He and the Varin girl worked at the lining of my *robe of gros grain* taffeta. Lajoie went to Valognes to the same furrier's to get marten skins.

The third day,

the furrier finished lining my robe. I gave him after supper six Lombardy skins for the interlining, and VI livres and V sols for two days work.

What a picture those two lines call up! The old manor kitchen, when the day's work was over and a good meal eaten, the new robe with its fine marten lining inspected by the interested household, passed by the seigneur and the money paid into the hand of the waiting furrier, before he starts on his way back to Valognes. Another mysterious garment is the *cotte-pointe*. The dictionary gives us as its definition, "a rich casaque worn over the cuirass." But the seigneur was surely not wearing armor at Mesnil-au-Val, although both Gilles de Gouberville and Symonnet wore the sword, the distinctive badge of the nobility.



Romilly Fedden
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TOWER AND FARM OF MESNIL-AU-VAL, 1932
FROM A PENCIL SKETCH BY ROMILLY FEDDEN

October 11, 1558 — Cantepye was at Bayeux and brought back a false scabbard for my sword.

. . .

May 13, 1562 — At Coutances for a velvet scabbard which Cantepye had ordered for my sword, 35 sols.

. . .

August 16, 1561 — At the fair of Guibray, I bought a sword belt for Symonnet.

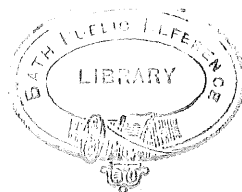
Of what this was made he does not say, but his own sword belts were of velvet, a material which he especially affected.

Of all the different garments, the one that seems most curious to us today is the *collet*, that round cape without arm-holes, made of leather or morocco, which was used to keep out the rain before the invention of umbrellas in 1680. On June 13, 1556, the indefatigable Thomas Girard "cut over a morocco cape."

It would seem, according to one note, that the ordinary visiting tailor of the manor did not know how to sew morocco leather, for "Cantepye paid 4 sols at Valognes today for the stitching of a morocco cape."

"September 19, 1559 — Nicolas Symon, tailor from Martinvaast came here to make me a leather cape." Perhaps it was for this that three days before he bought at the fair of Guibray "two skins of Spanish leather for 4 livres." But these capes were not all *de luxe*. "July 11, 1556 — Thomas Girard worked this evening after supper cutting out a cape of deer skin, the skins given me by Beaufort on Wednesday." The peasants and servants wore the *collet* made of ordinary sheepskin.

By the notes of his purchases, we know that his garments did not lack trimmings. "For a dozen shoulder knots, 4 sols." "At Caen from Bérot, silk buttons and shoulder knots, 20 sols." "Half a yard of yellow striped silk and yellow braid." "I gave Thomas Drouet 21 sols for black and white trimming



that he brought yesterday from Valognes for my *robe* and for the silk to sew it with."

October 4, 1553, he bought "19 yards of silk trimmings" and the next day the valiant Thomas Girard was at work making a *manteau* and a *soye*. The buttons were bought to match the doublets. Then there were clasps for his cloaks, and silk girdles and belts of all kinds and at all prices, of silk and of leather, and once there is a note of a purse that went with a velvet belt. He had another purse of which he must have been proud. "Th. Bunet of Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte and Marin Bataille of Cherbourg, who have just come from England, brought a purse sent me by Moissonnière." But the purse in the Cotentin was a rare object; its place was usually taken by a handkerchief, used as the peasants still use them, with a knotted corner full of coin. If Gilles de Gouberville had not often lost his handkerchief, we should not have known this. As it is we feel him very human when we read: "November 10, 1553 — I got up at daybreak and returned to look for a handkerchief that I lost yesterday afternoon at the Clos-des-Ventes."

May 6, 1555 — Early this morning I went to the Bergerye where Symonnet yesterday lost a handkerchief in which he had 48 sols. I found it.

. . .

August 6, 1556 — I went to hunt for my handkerchief that I lost yesterday putting out the fire at Le Rocher. I found it with 2 ecus which were in it.

February 3, 1560, he speaks of a *mouchoir de luxe*. "Sapincourt made me a present of a handkerchief worked in black silk."

Now for his headgear. He had hats of all sorts. "November 4, 1555 — I find François Dauge here, back from Paris, who brought me two felts sent me by Thomas Quatorze." He pays for them the following money: "I gave Quatorze, the

younger, 4 louis for the two hats that he sent me from Paris." They were cheaper at Valognes, where Cantepye bought a hat for 20 sols. It appears by an entry of March 29, 1556, that felts were an article of commerce in Rouen, coming by sea to Cherbourg. "Symonnet and Drouet went to Tourlaville to get some felts from a ship from Rouen; they went from there to Cherbourg, but did not get the felts." The same day Cantepye brought one from Valognes, however, for 20 sols, and he gave at another time "for a felt hat, 25 sols." Moreover, "Michel de la Fontayne brought me a Spanish felt which cost 35 sols; it was not worth 25, but I gave him 35." All these hats for his personal use were of superior quality. For those of his servants he paid usually 6 or 7 sols.

The handsomest of his hats was one of velvet from Bérot, at Caen, from whom he bought an ornament to go on it, and the velvet bonnets, for which he pays as much as 4 livres, 5 sols. When he traveled, the hats were carefully kept in a leather hatbox.

December 19, 1555 — when we arrived at Fourmigny, Symonnet discovered that he had forgotten my hatbox at La Cambe. He sent Lajoie back to get it.

Finally there was another hat called a *carlotte*. This could not be had at Valognes and twice he sends to Rouen for one.

October 22, 1553 — Richard Lamache and Th. Guesdon mercers, living at Cherbourg, stopped here on their way to Rouen. I gave Lamache 25 sols to bring me back a silk *carlotte*.

. . .

June 12, 1557 — The Curé of Tourlaville left for Rouen. I gave him an écu pistolet to get me a *carlotte*.

Now from his head, let us descend to his feet. We will begin with the leather, both that which he bought and that which was prepared at home. One of the rooms of the manor must have looked like a shoemaker's shop. Here were the

prepared skins of sheep, cows, horses and goats. Here too were French morocco and Spanish leathers, and leathers from India and the Levant. There are pages of entries that record the buying of these foreign leathers at Valognes, at Guibray, at Cherbourg. Then there is the constant record of the skins from the animals killed at the manor, which were carried to the tanneries at Saint-Lô and other places, where they were tanned and worked, and then returned to the manor.

December 28, 1560 — Arnould went to Valognes to fetch the skins to make the boots for Symonnet and me. He brought back with him a young man named Nicollas from Lagarde, the shoemaker, to cut out the boots from the skins.

The next day he sends "Pinchon to Valognes to take the boots, the mules and the slippers that Lagarde's man cut out yesterday." The following day, he sends the same Pinchon

to take the Indian leather to make the soles of my boots, mules and slippers. . . . Sunday, *jour des Rois*, before I went to mass, servants arrived from Lagarde at Valognes, bringing me my boots, mules and slippers made from the leather I had given them. For red leather for the tops of my boots and for cork for the mules and slippers and for the making: 28 sols and 5 sols that I gave them for wine.

Sometimes his slippers were made of velvet.

Besides all the shoes that were made to order, he bought for himself and his household, ready-made boots and shoes in large quantities.

Two things are striking in the many entries to do with shoes and clothing; one is that it was he himself who most often went to Cherbourg and Valognes and to the fairs and markets to buy for himself and his servants. He may have wished to be sure of the quality of the footwear that he gave them. The second curious point is that not once does he speak of *sabots*, despite the fact that they were in common use after the thirteenth century and mentioned more than once by Rabelais.

What of gloves? The same Moissonnière who sent him the purse, sent him a pair of gloves from England and, in 1554, Cantepye on his return from the war, "brought me a pair of velvet gloves."

August 10, 1561 — After lunch at Coutances, I counted what I had spent. I bought a comb, 2 sols; a pair of gloves, 12 sols. . . . April 1, 1558 — For a case of combs bought at Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, 8 sols.

The refinements of life were appreciated by the seigneur.

July 10, 1561 — I bought from Grandin, lace for my shirts, and soap. . . . July 1, 1555 — Today, began to make the rose water and the pommade.

For this pommade he bought at Bayeux "six little boxes to hold the pomade at Mesnil." But most important of all was his famous *Eau-de-Damas*, "eau très odorante, céphalique, stomachale, carminative, raréfiant les humeurs visqueuses et chassant les vents, servant aussi pour parfumer les mains et les mouchoirs."

July 19, 1553 — After holding court, I went to the Cordeliers, Cantepye with me, to get some pinks to make the *Eau de Damas*. Maistre Jehan Poulain gave me some *calamus aromaticus* (yellow iris) and *Florientine iris* (white iris) to add to the water.

We can see him, with Cantepye in attendance, following the good brother, Jehan Poulain, down the walks of the monastery garden on a summer day, talking as they went of the high affairs of the moment, to gather the iris which he would carry back for the rites of the stillroom at Mesnil-au-Val.

In reading through his entries on clothing, it is interesting to note that white, black, red, purple, yellow, tan, brown and gray were the colors in use; blue and green for clothing are never mentioned.

One thing constantly impresses us as we read page after page of the Journal; it is the special knowledge possessed by this man, on the most diverse subjects. Whether it is in the

administration of parish affairs, or in the higher administration of justice, in the conduct of a farm, in sowing or in reaping, the treatment of wounds, in the dyeing of cloth, in the weaving of linen, in the curing of leather, in the cut of a garment or of a pair of shoes, in the worth of a hat, his good sense and wisdom are unfailing.

CHAPTER VII

Money and the Food It Bought

House, food, clothes, all these necessities of the daily life of a household require ready money, and on every page of the Journal we find a record of Gilles de Gouberville's receipts and expenses stated in a great variety of coin. To us today with our simple coinage, this seems bewildering, and the keeping of such accounts a very complicated business. Not only were the pieces of money quite unrelated to one another, but their value changed from year to year and from month to month.

It is true that in 1532 Francis I had endeavored by law to regulate the money system, and had established a table of those monies whose use was authorized, giving their values. But if this ordinance was in force in Paris, it was certainly a dead letter in Normandy twenty years later. No less than 33 coins are mentioned in the Journal, of which 3 are English, 5 Spanish, 3 Portuguese, 4 Flemish, one Hungarian or Bavarian, 2 German and one Milanese. Almost every coin in Europe was in common circulation in this corner of Normandy, in these small parishes of the Cotentin. This was undoubtedly due to the commerce along the coast, though a more romantic explanation attributed it to the prizes captured on the high seas by the corsairs of this littoral.

Certainly only habit could have accustomed one to the use of such a variety of coins; only the daily handling of them could have taught their comparative values, and, even then, it was necessary to be continually on guard against the fluctuation in the exchange, with a pair of scales at hand, since many foreign coins were valued only by weight.

The gold coins with their shifting values were *angelot*, *croysades*, *ducat croysette*, *double ducat*, *double ducat de*

Henri, écu soleil, écu sol, écu pistolet, écu d'alliance, enseignes doubles, imperiales doubles, noble à la rose, portugayse, salut d'or. The highest in value of these was the portugayse, worth 34 livres.

The silver coins, in value up to as much as 42 sols, were *franc, réal, maille, horne, jocondale, teston, Phillipus, Chevalot* and *Anime*.

The small money, in value up to 18 *deniers*, consisted of *niquet, liard, gros, douzaine, double, carolus, blanc* and *jacques*.

The sire reduced all his coin to the common denominators, livre, sol and denier; 12 deniers make one sol, 20 sols make one livre or franc. The purchasing power of this money, in wheat and wages, was: 1 bushel of wheat, 12 sols; mean yearly wage of a man, 100 sols, of a woman, 60 sols.

Of the small money, two coins have given rise to popular sayings, though the pieces are long since forgotten; of the maille, worth half a denier, "*Il n'a ni sou ni maille*"; of the niquet, worth two deniers, "*C'est un niquetier*," of some one who pecks at his food.

There is history to be found in many of the pieces; to quote the old French, "The two houses of York and Lancaster making wars and quarrels, under the emblems of the red rose and the white rose, tried with emulation to see which could make the most perfect *noble à la rose*." And "It is to be observed of Henry II that in renewing the royal robes, his dalmatic, scepter and crowns and the money of France, he caused his portrait to be placed upon the ducats which are called after him, *double ducats de Henri*."

The following entries give examples of the almost daily computations which were necessary.

October 15, 1560 — Symonnet reminded me of Arnould's account of the purchases he made at Russy, which amounted to 33 sols; and 20 livres tournoys that he gave to de Morville; and a ducat that I gave

Thomas Drouet; and a double ducat that I gave Arnould. . . 32 livres, 18 sols.

. . .

October 19, 1560 — I gave Thomas Drouet three double ducats de Henri for six croisades that he had loaned me. . . 16 livres, 10 sols.

The fluctuation in value is seen in these quotations:

March 31, 1555 — I sent . . . to Symon what I owe him for a mill-stone, one angelot, 4 livres [or 80 sols].

. . .

December 21, 1560 — Symonnet gave me four angelots . . . worth 17 liv. [85 sols].

. . .

November 16, 1561 — Received from Guillemette Lorier, an angelot of Germany, worth 78 sols.

. . .

March 28, 1562 — One of his farmers gives him with other monies, "an angelot worth 86 sols."

The abbé pursues this question of money through page after page, even finding his bon sire in a mistaken calculation; he gives entry after entry establishing the difference in exchange from year to year, of coin after coin, down to the smallest. The very thought of household accounts in the sixteenth century is so depressing that I hasten away from the subject with a greatly increased respect for one who, for the thirteen years of the Journal in our possession, entered every day every expenditure of himself and his household in this madly confused money. It may have given you a feeling of opulence to receive your revenue in thirty-three different coins, but there must have been an added poignancy in parting with pieces of such lovely name as *impériales, saluts d'or* and *nobles à la rose*.

One of the endearing traits of the Sire de Gouberville and one which must have caused many of his diverse coins to

slip away, was his passion for hospitality. Quite at the beginning of the Journal we find an amusing instance of this.

March 18, 1553 — About nine in the morning I was in the room where Thomas Girard was sewing; a young man arrived, a native of Touraine — un Tourangeau — so he said, who had slept at Belleville's at Brix. He is a student of philosophy and wants to go to the Islands to pursue his studies; he stayed here all day.

March 19 — The young man from Touraine went to see Monsieur le viconte at Gonneville who gave him an écu. He came back to sleep here.

Good Friday. I did not move from here. Before mass, I went with François, le Tourangeau (who had been here since Tuesday and had not yet told me his name) to Henri Feuillye's.

The bon sire more than carried out the spirit of the old verse,

Salut! vois, l'on t'apporte et la table et le pain;
Sieds toi. Tu vais d'abord rassasier ta faim;
Puis, si nulle raison ne te force au mystère,
Tu nous dira ton nom, ta patrie et ton père.

The young philosopher remained at the manor as a guest for two years. He was called Maître François, in deference to his learning, and received not only bed and board, but clothing; the indefatigable Thomas Girard came to make him hose and a doublet, while the bon sire bought him shoes and "from P. Benest a hat for Maître François." He showed his gratitude in many ways and taught his host the use of alembics and the making of *eau-de-vie*. Finally, on March 28, 1555, "the young man took leave of us. I gave him 10 sols and François Drouet saw him on his way."

It is almost incredible to read the number of passers-by who found a welcome at his table. It is a matter of every day, year in and year out. And when he is expecting invited guests, he takes a pleasure in his preparations that warms the pages of the Journal.

August 27, 1553 — Cantepye went today to Cherbourg where he

bought meat, one pound of sugar, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, saffron and ginger; because the Curé of Cherbourg, Sire Jehan Poictevin and his wife and others from Valognes are coming to dine here tomorrow. Tonight Henry Lorion arrived to cook the dinner tomorrow. Adam Leroux brought some chickens. They supped and slept here.

At daybreak (Sunday) I sent Lajoie to Valognes to get a pot of hippocras, 4 pots of wine and a pound of candles.

The Curé of Cherbourg, Pierre d'Ossés, Jehan de Poictevin and his wife, Haultpy Loys, and Denis Lorion dined here. After dinner I went with them as far as Saint-Martin.

Gilles de Gouberville's open-handed generosity did not stop at his own board, which seems to have been spread for the family, the parish, the province and the stranger; he was constantly sending presents to his friends and neighbors. There is a frequent interchange of gifts between Mesnil-au-Val and his sister's Château of Saint-Naser, and between Mesnil-au-val and his uncle's Manor of Russy; "capons, the fattest I have ever seen, ready for the spit," hare, and above all his famous venison pasty, were the most honored gifts which he presented on all especial occasions.

October 19, 1553 — I gave Michel Lebrissés a hare and a leveret to take tomorrow to Maistre Girard Quentet de Quethou, who is of the party on Sunday at Lebourguignon's at Varreville.

November 18, 1553 — Symonnet went to Valognes to take to Maistre Pierre Jehan, the king's governor, three hares, as he is giving a banquet tomorrow for his wife's *bienvenue*.

As for the venison pasties, "June 30, 1556 — After I had breakfasted, arrived Pierre Lefort, Michel Donville and François Damours who regaled themselves with a venison pasty, cherries and cream."

It was the present which he most often made to those with whom he had business relations. "January 13, 1554, I sent to Captain Couriac [at the Château of Cherbourg] a venison

pasty and fat capons, which Symonnet presented to the lady, his wife."

April 9, 1562, At Caen (where he had gone to arrange about the sale of wood in the state forests in the Cotentin), "I stopped at Mesnil-Picart's where I found Advocat Verrières to whom I gave a venison pasty which Samson carried to his house."

September 28, 1554, he expected the prior and the bailiff of the Abbey of Lessay for supper, good Benedictines both. And he gives us a part of the menu:

Two larded chickens, capons, two partridges, one hare given me by Jehan Levesque, and a venison pasty that my cousin de Tocqueville sent me. Between five and six the said gentlemen arrived to sup and sleep here, before going tomorrow to dine at Gonnevillle with the Vicomte Le Guette.

Are you curious to know who made these pasties?

March 13, 1560 — Being at Russy I had Lajoie make two venison pasties from venison that M. Le Maistre Thybout had sent me to Mesnil and Symonnet sent on to me here. Charlot and Noël and Pinchon and Thoysnet helped him and it was all nearly burnt up in the oven.

As the abbé adds: "So it needed the efforts of five united chefs to succeed in burning two pasties; one suffices nowadays to do as much."

When one thinks of the size of his normal household — twenty-four in all — and of the stream of guests constantly passing through for meals, it is not surprising to read the quantities of food consumed. Usual purchases were half a veal, half a sheep, a quarter of beef, and a whole pig, which turned on the spit in the great kitchen. Besides fresh meat, they salted down supplies of beef, veal and pork; and, a great delicacy, kid, which was the most esteemed dish of the day in all classes, from the Dame de Bricquebec, to the last of the servants who sniffed its delectable odor. It was worthy to present even to the tax collector.

"August 2, 1553 — I sent half a kid to the collector of taxes."

Besides the salted meats, there was lard to render and sausages of various sorts to make. There is an amusing note regarding a *hastelet*, a piece of fresh pork, cooked on the spit.

December 11, 1559 — Thomas Drouet supped here and while we were at supper, *apropos* of a question that arose about keeping a piece of the *hastelet*, that we had had to eat, I said to Symonnet, who was joking me: "You will do the same when you have a house." This offended him so much, that he did not deign to speak to me for the rest of the evening.

Besides these meats, his table was constantly groaning under poultry of all kinds and a great variety of game. In his poultry yard were chickens and ducks and capons, pigeons and turkeys. The turkey is a surprise here since one has often been told that the first turkey was brought to France by the Jesuits and was cooked at the wedding feast of Charles IX in 1570.

Yet, December 27, 1559, we read: "A servant from Martin Lucas of Sainte-Croyx brought me a turkey cock and hen, I gave him 4 sols." This large *pourboire* shows the pleasure Gilles de Gouberville had in the gift; but that he is not surprised at the sight of the birds proves that he must have seen them before. So, it would seem that the tables of the Cotentin knew the exotic aroma of the turkey even before that of the king.

Pigeons from the old dovecote at Mesnil-au-Val often went out from the manor as gifts to his men of law and tradesmen. The wood pigeon, on the other hand, was deemed worthy as an offering in high places, with such game as woodcock, snipe, quail, wild duck, wild swan, wild goose and plover. One December night he writes: "We had a cygnet for supper, the fattest and tenderest that it is possible to imagine."

Hare and rabbit were to be had in abundance and the royal boar's head often graced his board, while venison — used in

the modern sense, and not as by him to designate the meat of all wild animals — was constantly on his table in season. He shows us his preference, too, in cut:

Gilles Auvrey came from Néhou and brought me a quarter of venison that Thibault had sent for him and me. I took the saddle and left him the haunch.

It must have been the ships from southern ports, from Portugal, Spain and the Mediterranean, that brought to the shores of the Cotentin such pleasant cargoes as olive oil and pomegranates. Today you could search the peninsula from end to end without the chance of finding anything so exotic as a pomegranate, though pomegranates were known as early as the thirteenth century, and were often in the hands of the bon sire.

"May 1, 1560 — M. Regnault de Digoville brought me some oranges and olive oil sent to me by Besnard Lecrespin." Who was Besnard Le Crespin? A friend or a pirate, or both? The rover on the high sea knew, without doubt, in what châteaux and manors he could find a market for his luxuries.

January 30, 1553 — At daybreak I left here and went to Valognes. I held the sitting of the court and then had dinner with Denys and many others. While we were at dinner, Hamon Leteilier from the outskirts of Cherbourg came in and gave Berteauville and me, each an orange and a lemon. After dinner the tax collector came to talk to me about our report; I gave him the orange and the lemon that Hamon gave me and half of a kid, that Symonnet carried to his house.

November 22, Pinchon came from Mesnil. He brought woodcock, lemons, oranges and pomegranates. After dinner I went, Symonnet and Pinchon with me, to Neufville to see the Baron d'Aulney, who is ill; I gave him the lemons, oranges, and the three pomegranates. I found him in his room and Mademoiselle there also; I was there about an hour, then took leave; it was not yet sunset. When I returned, I had them measure the rest of the grain that they have threshed this week.

The yeast that was used for bread at the manor, came from Valognes. If, perhaps, there was not enough water to turn the mill or they were pressed for time in the house, wheaten bread could be bought of the baker of the parish. Probably he mixed barley with wheat for his flour, as the ordinary bread made at the manor was coarse in quality. In cases of illness, or when guests arrived, white bread or "soft" bread was sent for to Valognes or Cherbourg.

Whenever he was at Russy, he bought at Bayeux Chapter House bread, which seemed to have had a certain renown. He does not say whether the clergy of the Chapter House made it or sold it or ate it. Anyway it must have been good, for, "Hoping that the Sieur de Heurtebye would sup at Russy, I bought at Bayeux some fresh Chapter House bread — 3 sols."

At Caen and Bayeux they still sell a bun called *fouace*. "November 2, 1560 — For a *fouace* bought at Russy to use as *pain bénit* — 2 sols, 6 deniers." There is another bread known only in Normandy, called *cymenet*, used for the blessed bread distributed at Church on Sundays, which Gilles de Gouberville bought in his day.

Learning that the Curé of Tourlaville was ill, he sent him oranges and spinach. Figs, too, and raisins and plums and rice were yearly purchases in Cherbourg at Easter time. As for cheeses, he never buys any, but twice he receives them as presents, once from the Sieur de Tourlaville and once from Madame la Vicomtesse d'Alençon.

He buys olive oil by the jar, and vinegar, mustard, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, saffron and ginger, all from one Lamache in Cherbourg. As for salt, one of the oldest necessities of life, he bought it in large quantities at Cherbourg, and at Bayeux.

October 12, 1561 — Arnauld and Noël brought back from Cherbourg 12 bushels of salt, which cost 36 sols.

December 14, 1561 — Charlot brought from Bayeux to Russy 2 bushels of salt which cost 36 sols.

The difference in the price in the two towns is explained by the franchise accorded to Cherbourg.

October 9, 1560 — M. de Cresnay came to see me at Gouberville and found me at the cider press where they were pressing apples. We went for a walk by the sea, at low tide, as far as the salt beds. Messire Jasper, the vicar and others were with us.

How unfortunate it is that Gilles de Gouberville was no Isaac Walton! What fascinating pages might he not have given us! But though one may believe that he cast a line in the little river, the Trottebec, which runs so pleasantly from Mesnil through the Tourlaville meadows to the sea, there is no note of any joy in fishing nor any description of it as an art.

"April 8, 1557 — Symonnet and Donville went fishing with a line for trout up the river Séréé."

Amongst the fish which are mentioned are eels, from the sea and from the pool at Gattermare; bass, brill, carp, cod, conger, dory, white herring, red herring, sand eels, porpoise, whiting, mackerel, flatfish, skate, red mullet, pilchards, salmon, trout, turbot and sole. Of these we find that conger and mackerel were salted down, and an unidentified fish, called *roussette*, was dried. He sent Symonnet to the potter at Brix to get jars to put down his salted conger.

Of lobster we read, but not of *langouste*; and of oysters, which he spells deliciously *ouystres* and not *huîtres* as today. Crabs, shrimps and mussels also came to his table. Oysters were cheap enough to make one's mouth water.

March 12, 1556 — A man from Bretteville brought oysters in the shells on which we lunched, Les Hachées, the Curé of Tourlaville and I. For the same oysters, 3 sols.

Mussels were eaten only at Russy and came from the sea near Bayeux.

Salmon must have been abundant then in the rivers of the coast, for they, too, were cured.

. . .

March 11, 1558 — Lajoie came back from Russy and brought me salmon from my Uncle.

. . .

December 6, 1559 — I had the better of two salmon which were brought to my brother at Sorteval.

. . .

December 7, 1559 — Claude Cabart sent me a salted salmon.

. . .

December 10, 1560 — I sent a salted salmon to my man of law.

When he was at Russy in 1561:

My brother and his wife [sic] came to dinner. We ate turbot, skate, herrings and mullet.

In the same year his brother sends him from his place at Sorteval near the sea, "a turbot, a dory and a lobster."

On June 11, 1557, as he was expecting a number of people to dinner, he sent one of his men at midnight to get sole at Denneville. He gives us the fish that figured at this repast. "From Tourlaville, 4 sole, 2 skate, 1 flatfish for 6 sous; from Gouberville, 2 congers, 2 mackerel and 1 mullet: 15 sous."

That the herring were as variable in their habits then as they are now, we know from this entry:

I sent 6 white herring and 6 herring and a little more than *half a foot of eel* from Gattermare to the Sieur de Tourlaville. This year there has been no white herring at Tourlaville nor at Cherbourg.

August 23, 1555, Madame de Saint-Naser sent him as a present a monster mullet which, he says, measured "two and a half feet long." "March 6, 1560 — I dined at Bayeux with the Vicomte, where amongst other fish we ate a carp, very good, which the wife of the *greffier* had prepared accord-

ing to her taste." But, alas, he did not ask for the recipe of her sauce and write it down for us.

Porpoise was a delicacy both rare and expensive, which served as an offering of ceremony. "August 4, 1553 — Robert de Sottevast sent me a large piece of raw porpoise." On February 27, 1554, he was engaged in a lawsuit at Saint-Lô, which he was anxious to settle promptly. We see him diligently endeavoring to get some porpoise, and though he does not say for what reason, we can guess it. "I spoke to Harcla at Saint-Pierre and asked him to get some porpoise which he has promised to send me." It did not arrive, so "I sent Thomas Drouet to Fermanville to get some porpoise, which my cousin gave me." The next day Thomas Drouet sets off for Saint-Lô to see the prosecutor, carrying the porpoise meat.

The following entry has a familiar sound to anyone who lives in the country. "Lajoie went to Cherbourg to get fish, but found nothing but cod."

His "nièce de Cresnays" seems to have been an energetic woman, so that we are not surprised to read:

We went to Montfarville to see my niece, where I stopped to supper. At four o'clock she took me to see a fish pond that she had had made at the sea.

Close to his Manor of Gouberville was the little port from which the fishing boats put out to shoot their nets, with varying success.

September 19, 1554 — I went to sleep at Gouberville. At sunset, we went out to draw the nets and were there till midnight, a dozen of us, including the vicar. We took 4 bar, 1 brill, 1 flounder and, at the third drawing, the net caught on a rock and we had to take it in.

As we have seen, he had his own nets out over all the country around and could draw in supplies from all directions.

Saturday, July 28, 1555 — I waited for the Sieurs de Pierrepont and de Braffoys, Canons of Coutances, until 3 in the afternoon, when they finally came, and we went on to Digoville to speak to the Curé about

the lawsuit between myself and the Chapter of Coutances for the titles of Mesnil. It was nearly night when we left; I thought that the canons would sup and sleep here, but they went to the Curé of Gonneville, who is an uncle of de Pierrepont. . . .

The Vicar of Coqueville had sent me 1 conger, 2 large pilchards. The men at Gouberville had sent me 3 soles, 2 mullets, 1 conger, 2 bass, 2 flounder.

That lawsuit with the Chapter of Coutances was a serious matter. It was finally won by Gilles de Gouberville, but at the price of how many dinners:

January 24, 1553 — The Canon Pierrepont, the Prior of Hyanville and the receivers of the Chapter of Coutances told me at Valognes that they were coming to dinner tomorrow at Mesnil. I bought 1 duck, 1 partridge, 7 sols; 1 shoulder of larded veal, 8 sols; 1 rabbit which Symonnet must get. We waited for the prior and canon till half past one. They arrived as we were finishing dinner, very hungry, from Cherbourg. We ate 1 curlew, 1 partridge, 1 game *pâté* — boar — 3 pots of dry wine from Cherbourg, 4 sols. One flagon of wine from Valognes, 2 sols, 6 deniers.

These details may appear insignificant, but food and drink play an important part in the lives of even the most abstemious, and from such trivialities as these we form an idea of the interior economy of that sixteenth-century manor house, of all that came in and went out. It seems from these many notes that our seigneur, and his friends of like quality, had upon their tables in great abundance all that we have today — with the exception of fruits — but that we probably lack many dishes that were to be found upon their sideboards.

Sport and Recreation

What were the amusements with which our household filled the winter evenings? What the games they played on Sundays and holidays? Distractions were not lacking. The bon sire and his friends were a stout-hearted, merry lot, and they played as hard as they worked.

A great crony of Gilles de Gouberville was the Curé of Tourlaville, of that church upon the hill, amid the trees near the Château de Tourlaville. He spent a great deal of time at Mesnil, coming over frequently to dinner, though not always in such circumstances as those of the night of June 26, 1557, when "The Curé de Tourlaville on his way back from Valognes stopped to supper with me and told me that he had just seen a thief hung and a woman burned for killing two children." These incidents excited no further comment and probably did not affect their appetites in that day of strong stomachs.

We should like the report of some of their evening talks when they must have discussed the chances of the village teams at bowls or skittles or *choule*.

This last game was one of those prohibited by Charles V in 1369, at a time when he hoped, by discouraging games, to encourage an interest in shooting with the crossbow.

Choule, the most popular game of strength in the Middle Ages, as dice was the most popular game of chance, was too deeply rooted in all parts of the kingdom to be eradicated by law. In the sixteenth century, this game which reflected the roughness of contemporary manners was seldom played without injuries to the players, and those who took part were lucky if they escaped without a broken limb or a cracked head. In many places the game perpetuated both racial feuds and local enmities, under the form of sport.

It took the whole countryside for its field, and appears to have been a kind of cross-country hockey. The players, usually from two parishes, numbered as many as twelve on a side. The game often started in the morning when the ball was thrown and the players, armed with sticks, darted after it, fighting for its possession, keeping it always ahead, sending it on, until the end of the day might find them far from home.

January 14, 1552 — Tonight, about eleven o'clock, I sent François Doisnard to my cousin de Brillevast and to Captain du Téil, with letters asking them to come to our aid for the *choule* at Saint-Mor, tomorrow. I asked them to send me an answer before mass in the morning.

Monday, 15th — Saint Mor's Day — Before I was up, Quinéville Groult and Ozouville, soldiers from the fort at Omonville, arrived here coming from Valognes. We breakfasted all together, then went to Saint-Mor, they, Cantepye, Symonnet, Moisson, Lajoie, Gaultier Birette and several others. We arrived there while they were saying mass, which said, Maître Robert Potet threw the ball and the game went on till an hour before sunset and led us as far as Bretteville, where Gratian Cabart got it and won. In my party were my cousin de Raffoville, my cousin de Brillevast, Maître Guillaume Vasrel, de Réville, Captain Téil, Nicolas Gohel, Bouffart d'Orglandes and several others; and among our adversaries, Leparç, Arteney, Guillaume Cabart and their band as well as a few from Cherbourg. On our way back Cantepye stopped to supper with Jacques Cabart, because he had been into the sea after the ball and was very wet and changed his clothes at Rouxel's at Bretteville. Passing by Cosmes du Bosc's — Symonnet, Le Leurron, Moisson, Lajoie who led my horse, Nicolas Drouet, Jehan Groult, Lorimier and others — we stopped and had 4 pots of very good cider, 4 sols. It was dark when we got here.

It would seem that Gilles de Gouberville followed the game on horseback, possibly watching as umpire and enforcing the rules; probably some one else performed the same office for the other side. The sides were made up, like a village cricket team, from all classes, the seigneur leading, his cousins, his friends, his family, his servants and his peasants taking

part, and all stopping together for a drink in the most friendly and democratic fashion.

There were many other days such as the one just described. The following year they played again at Saint-Mor and "came back about midnight, after supping with Captain du Téil. The ball was lost at Barnevast"; which proves that nothing stopped them, neither sea nor forest.

Gilles de Gouberville himself played in the parish games. "After vespers, I played at *choule* and fell on my knee so hard that I ripped up my hose and the lining, knee to thigh." Another day, "The Curé of Tournlaville left here early and went to say mass at Tournlaville, then came back for vespers. He played with us at *choule* all the rest of the day. He supped and slept here."

It must have been as rough or even rougher than a modern game of football, to judge from the following:

Playing at *choule* in the *Clos Berger*, Cantepye running, collided with me, striking my right breast with such force that I had the wind knocked out of me. It was with difficulty that they got me back here. I was unconscious for a quarter of an hour, and had to go to bed.

The next day he did not get up and was not much better in spite of the poultice of melilot and oil of juniper that he applied. He then sent for the Vicar of Saint-Vaast to find out if any bones were broken, took a pill, put on another poultice of yeast and in about a week was up and out again.

Sunday, as it has always been in France, was the great day for this game and for all manner of diversions. After attending mass, either in the manor chapel or in the village church, the remaining hours were given up to recreation. They played *le jeu de paume*, as they still play it in the Basque country, against the church, in the court of the manor, in the market at Bayeux, in the donjon of the castle at Cherbourg, wherever there was a good wall. Quoits, too, on the sands at Cherbourg, and skittles at the manor, where they had an alley.

Bowls was a favorite game in the villages, as it is today, and everyone played, servants and master and clergy; but the most popular diversion was wrestling. It usually took place in the churchyard after vespers; sometimes parish struggled with parish, sometimes it was the married men against the unmarried. We find Gilles de Gouberville himself wrestling with the men of the village.

Archery, as in England, was also a pastime of skill. They were having a match at Briarye-Paris, when Thomas Drouet, who often seems to have been in trouble, broke Gilles Auvrey's bow in stringing it.

There is no mention in the Journal of cockfighting; perhaps it was not violent enough to please the taste of the moment, when fights between Gilles de Gouberville's bulls were a form of recreation. "I had them lead one of the bulls from here to fight with a bull from the forest, which was done; the wild bull lost."

However, there were diversions of a higher order, in the form of the morality and miracle plays and mysteries that were often given. The common foundation of these pieces was the development of some religious or moral truth or church legend; they were sermons in action, often enlivened by farce intended to ridicule the manners and customs of the day. Because of their religious character, they were generally given in the cemeteries, sometimes in the churches and, more rarely, in the village squares. Everyone, clergy, nobles and peasants, came from long distances to see these spectacles; the hour of the mass in all the neighboring parish churches was set early in order that everyone might be on time.

Although the notes in the Journal are terse, they are enough to show the general interest that was taken in these plays and that they were under the patronage of the clergy. Every Christmas Eve we see part of the household starting out at ten o'clock to walk to the church at Digoville to see a morality

played at the end of the Midnight Mass — probably the story of the Nativity — from which they returned only for the *réveillon* at an hour before daylight.

In September, 1559, there was a miracle play at Valognes, which was given on successive Sundays for several weeks. One of the maids at the manor, La Harelle, went the first time and on her return talked so much about its wonders that the whole village, including the vicar, went the following week.

It is in the following year that he gives us an interesting note: "In the afternoon, Clément Querqueville of Cherbourg, coming back from Valognes, passed by here. He had a devil's mask to take to those in Cherbourg who are going to act in a farce (*follye*).” This *follye* was given on Assumption Day, when "Guillemine, Arnould and the others from here" went to Cherbourg to see it, returning in the evening; and on the Sunday after, "Arnould and Michelle and Th. Drouet saw it again."

When the autumn evenings closed in and during the months till the summer came around again, life in the manor centered in the great kitchen, where the master of the house, his family and his servants passed the time by firelight and candlelight.

We see them, the whole company whom we know so well; the bon sire, the gentle Guillemette, the fiery Symonnet, Cantepye and the indeterminate half brothers, Jacques and Arnould and Noël; and below the salt, Lajoye and the men and women servants, with two or three spinning wheels whirling softly, as the women talk and the men play card games — some of them games that are now but a name. Such is *mal-content*. "In the evening, Sainte Catherine's Eve, we all played at malcontent, until midnight." And *renette*? "After dinner, my cousin; Madame de Borlande and her daughter came here. I lost 5 sols playing against her at *renette*." Then there was *tric-trac*, ancient and honorable game of backgammon, played not

only for love, but for money and for higher stakes. "October 2, 1555 — After supper, Les Hachées and I played *tric-trac*. He played his field of Hachées against my mill of Crevières. He lost, for which I was glad." Was his Crevières the mill that still bears that name at Tollevaast?

While he played *tric-trac* at his table, the servants would have been playing cards at theirs. "Drouet supped here and lost 11 sols playing cards with Arnould, Le Monstre, Bertin and others."

And, now, this is a pleasant picture:

February 6, 1554 — It has never stopped raining all day. The men were all in the fields, but the rain chased them in. This evening, after vespers, we read in *Amadis de Gaule*, how he vanquished Dordan.

Here we have this "noble chatelain" invested with an important office, taking a book and reading aloud to his servants who had been driven indoors by the rain and were probably all wet and weary. As for the book itself, *L'Amadis de Gaule*, the translation by Nicholas d'Herberoy was printed only in 1550, and it is astonishing that within so short a time, we should find it in this manor in the depths of the country. It describes a succession of adventures, one more incredible and marvellous than the other, and to realize the charm it would hold for that party in the kitchen, one must remember that they were all believers in the incredible and marvelous — even the master.

April 14, 1553 — Symonnet and Morisseau went shooting and got a hare. It was dark when they returned and they said that they had heard Helquin the Huntsman in the old wood.

If you would like to know who Helquin the Huntsman was, you will find a full description in the eighth book of the history by Orderic Vital written in 1091. He says he had the true story from the lips of a priest named Gauchelin. Like so many of these old legends, it has a moral. Imagine all the battalions

of hell trampling the heavens under the leadership of Helquin, carrying on their shoulders the coffins upon which ride the ghosts of the damned, who fill the night with their shrieks of terror and remorse, hoping for aid only in the prayers of the living and the masses that the church may say for their souls.

Helquin! In him we recognize the Erlking. All the way from the cold white country of the North he came, a long mad gallop through the centuries. Symonnet and Morrisseau were hurrying home that night through forests close to the spot where the early Scandinavians landed, to fix the stamp of their race upon the land of the Franks forever. Today, in Normandy when in winter the flocks of wild birds cross the marshes with their mournful, weird cries, you may hear the old peasants say: "C'est la chasse d'Hérode." So has the word become corrupted and the significance lost.

It was such stories that most often diverted the household on long winter evenings. But at Christmas and at Easter the talk was of the season, and they sang the *cantiques* proper to the time, and when a man of learning happened to be of the company, you can imagine how they all listened to him.

Such a one was Girard Durand, attached to the household of Madame de Bricquebec. He fell ill at Mesnil-au-Val and remained there for several days; one evening, after supper, he translated the hymn sung in the diocese during Lent "O Christe, qui lux es et dies," into French for them.

Two other books which customarily occupied the thoughts and conversation of the house were the *Almanach* and the *Prognostications* of Nostradamus. The *Almanach* of the famous astrologer, whose name has remained in the popular consciousness to this day, appeared in 1550 and the *Prognostications* were published in 1555.

November 19, 1560 — Saint-Samson brought me from Bayeux an *Almanach* of Nostradamus.

December 14, 1562 — It is fine weather, so warm that one could ask for nothing better. It is the day of the solstice, according to Nostradamus.

He had other books which he valued: those left him by his father and mother and the twelve volumes left to him by Guillaume,⁸ his brother, the scholar who died in Paris in 1555. From his uncle he must also have inherited a few. The first book to which he makes reference is the French translation of Machiavelli.

January 28, 1550 — For a book of psalms in French, 4 sols.

February 25, 1552 — Very deep snow. I spent most of this day with Guillaume Le Clerc calculating *Tabulas system planetarum, in abco apud Herlicum Cornelium*.

June 4, 1552 — I was with Jehan Le Clerc who brought me back here and in the evening brought me a swarm of bees. About 4 o'clock, the Curé of Cherbourg passed by here and I walked with him as far as the old wood. He told me three or four stories from the IV book of Rabelais and has promised to lend me the book.

August 8, 1553 — I went to see the Curé de Cherbourg just back from Paris, who lent me a book in French, called *Prince Nicholas*.

November 27, 1554 — At Valognes I took to Maître Jehan Bormet, the *Promptuaire des médailles* and he gave me back *Les Leçons de Pierre Messie*.

The first of these books was a collection of portraits and medallions engraved on wood and published in Lyons in 1553 with Latin, French and Italian text. The other was published in Paris in 1552 and was intitled *Divers Lessons by Pierre Messie, a Gentleman of Séville, Containing True and Memorable Stories, Done into French by Claude Grayet*.

So we see that our bon sire was a man of a certain education, with such varied interests as must have made him a mine of information, when he chose to discourse in the evenings to his assembled household.

And now we come to a diversion indulged in at various

seasons, but especially on *Mardi Gras*. This was called *porter le momon*. The exact meaning of the word "momon" is lost, but the custom was to dress up some object and carry it in a band to the neighboring houses, where the host was obliged to guess what it was. This, of course, he seldom succeeded in doing and generally paid a forfeit or a sum of money. It served invariably as a pretext for copious libations. The winners went triumphantly on to the next house where they repeated the game. There is frequent mention of this amusement, not only at Mesnil, but at Russy.

January 25, 1553 — Before I got up, Thomas Drouet came to invite me to his wife's *relevailles*. I did not go, as I was expecting several people to dinner. After supper, Cantepye, Symonnet and Jehan Drouet, went there to *porter le momon* and stayed till midnight and Maître François was so drunk that he was covered with mud when he returned. François Drouet and Jehan Drouet put him to bed. Gaultier Birette had supper there and came back very gay. Jehan Groult remained, as he had drunk so much that he could neither speak nor walk. I went the next day to Drouet's, as Jehan Groult was still there.

February 6, 1553 — Jehan Auvré (Vicar of Mesnil) François, Thomas and Collas Drouet, Lemagnen and his *varlet*, went to *porter le momon* to Des Essarts at Saint Gabriel, to the Cabart's at Digoville and to the manor there, where the Bonshommes are farmers. They did not get back till midnight.

February 18, 1560 — I went over to Sorteval. After we had arrived there a big party came to *porter le momon*: le Sieur de Couvert and his wife, Mlle de Caterville and her sister, le Sieur Duquesne and Hyppolite Tousé and others whom I did not know. They won from my brother, then they went on to Villiers and de Neufville.

That excessive drinking of good Normandy cider had its usual result, we gather on many pages. When it was his own friends who had imbibed too freely, he notes their state by the expression *bons compagnons* (lively fellows) and *bien pensés*. But when it was the vicar or a mere acquaintance, he used no softening word, but said that they were *ivre* or *saoul* (drunk).

The Christmas revels were ushered in by the yule log on Christmas Eve. "December 24, after dinner I had the yule log brought into the kitchen by my servants aided by Th. and Nicollas Vaultier. Girard Pivoine and Jehan Parys. Then we all went to vespers." Later the sire appeared at Midnight Mass in the church at Mesnil-au-Val, in the midst of his villagers, and then walked back, along the lane between the trees. The lighting of the great Christmas fire and a feast followed. On Christmas morning the voices of children were to be heard at the door:

Salut, Noël, d'où viens-tu
Depuis un an que je t'avais vu.

Christmas Day. I did not go out. I gave XV sols to the school children who came several times singing carols.

Of Wine Cellar and Cider Barrel

Gilles de Gouberville lived largely and well; yet the wine cellar, an accompaniment of even a modest scale of living in France today, had no place in the domestic economy of his manor. Whenever he wanted wine, either for entertaining or in cases of illness, he sent to Valognes or Cherbourg for a few pots. The wine merchants did not ordinarily sell it by the bottle, but drew it from the cask as it was wanted.

You can picture Gilles de Gouberville with his brother-in-law, M. de Saint-Naser, meeting in Cherbourg, leaving their horses with the lackeys, and making a round of the wine merchants — to Bedals and Cornettes and Orenge — to taste the wines, probably bespeaking the best for their own use. Arnould rode in from Mesnil one day for white wine which the seigneur wrathfully returned, as it was "full of lees."

When Madame de Saint-Naser was ill, her brother on his way to visit her bought a bottle at Galé which he took to be filled by the wine merchant with "good claret" for her.

When one wished, however, to be sure of a really good old vintage, one had to remember where one had drunk such a wine, and happy was he who could recall the cellar of some abbey or presbytery. Gilles de Gouberville had such a memory.

November 1, 1553 — I did not go to mass, as I had a bad cold. I sent Jacques to Valognes to the Curé de Cherbourg to ask for some old wine. This Curé de Cherbourg, who was one of the sire's intimate friends, lived at Valognes. In 1555, when Gilles de Gouberville was in Valognes to prove his family claims, he sent Symonnet "to get a flagon of wine from Monsieur de Cherbourg," and this although he was at the door of his usual merchant, Noël Laborde. Again in 1557, when he had a cold

and had to keep his room, he thought of his godson de Raffo-ville, the sailor: "I sent Michelet, the vicar, to my godson, to get some *vin de rosette* and some Claret, of which he brought me a flagon each."

It is to be supposed that his claret was Bordeaux, as Bordeaux is still known by that name in England. Burgundy he calls *cléret de Bourgogne*. Claret was evidently the generic term for red wine. The *rosette* of which he speaks is mentioned only once. It may have been the forerunner of the *vin rosée* of today.

Of "white wine" he speaks generally, and more particularly of the "vin d'Anjou, fort bon."

And now comes an entry that has color.

February 19, 1553 — I stopped at La Robine's [an inn at Cherbourg]. She declared that she would give me a pint of *vin de la palme* and went upstairs to fetch it. I called in Clement Liés, Malesart, Lapommeraye and Gilles Auvré whom I saw passing in the street.

Wine of the palm! Wine, made in Africa of the juice of the fruit of the date palm. How did it come there? Malesart, the son of La Robine, was a bold corsair. Those few words take us — who knows — to the far white walls of Sali in Morocco?

We learn one convivial custom from the Journal. When one was invited to dinner anywhere, it was considered polite to carry, or send in one's name, to one's host, one or more pots of wine.

April 21, 1555 — I dined at Valognes with the Procuror du Roi, Raoul Dager and La Girotterye; for a pot of wine, 2 sols, 6 deniers.

November 6, 1560 — I dined at the house of the Vicount de Bayeux, where were also Ruppale, Lemarcourt, the Curé of Maisi and others. We paid, the Sieur de Ruppale and I, one pot of wine, which cost 5 sols. My part was 2 sols, 6 deniers.

June 20, 1561 — I dined at the house of the Vicount de Bayeux, the

Sieur de Bessay his brother was there and Le Mesgres; for a pot of wine, 4 sols.

October 1, 1562 — I went to dine at the house of the Curé de Cherbourg where I found the Sieur de Ciffrevast and the Sieur de Gréville who would not allow me to pay a pot of wine, but paid it for me.

Yet you may remember that it was to the Curé de Cherbourg that he himself went for old wine.

Over and above all other drinks, *hippocras*, a liquor composed of honey and other ingredients infused in wine, or beer, or cider, or brandy, was used for ceremonial purposes. It was very expensive and was offered only on the most important occasions. Gilles de Gouberville only once mentions serving it at his own table. But if he was invited to the wedding of friends or relatives, or to what were called the *bienvenue* and the *relevailles*, his arrival was announced by a pot of hippocras which he sometimes presented himself.

July 7, 1554 — Symonnet went to Gouberville with my clothes for the wedding tomorrow of my cousin de Raffoville, who marries the sister of the Sire du Tôt. He took, at the same time, a pot of hippocras that cost 20 sols.

September 29, 1554 — I sent Lajoye to Valognes to get a pot of hippocras from Denys Lorion to carry tomorrow to the *bienvenue* of the wife of the Sieur de Barville at Brillevast.

Eau-de-vie was made at the manor.

July 28, 1554 — Maître Pierre Tende, apothecary at Valognes, lent me a vessel in which he makes his *eau-de-vie*.

September 4, 1554 — I gave 15 sols to Michelet, the coppersmith for two days' work mending the vessel for making the *eau-de-vie*.

Cider was the usual daily drink on all tables. It is as commonly used in the Cotentin, January, 1932, as it was in the sixteenth century. Every real Norman considers himself a judge of it today as then, when if he had any good *par excellence* — he sent a few flagons to his friends.

I stayed at home today. This evening a servant of my cousin de Billon brought me a flagon of good new cider.

January 22, 1555 — While we were at supper [at Russy] a young man named Le Mesle arrived, sent by Thoigny to ask my uncle for some good cider for the Président de Mandreville for whom Thoigny is giving a dinner.

Cider leads us to the orchards of Mesnil-au-Val, which besides the gardens and far-reaching fields of pleasant name, knew his fostering care. His fame is known to the apple growers of his province and if you want to know the lore of the apple in all that is most recondite, go to Normandy. There it is a cult, of which our bon sire was a high priest.

It is true that he had rivals in the country. There was his friend the Seigneur de Lestre, at whose house he stopped on his journeys. This gentleman, by name Guillaume Dursus, was from Navarre. As a recompense for his valor during the campaigns of Charles VIII, he obtained naturalization in France and the right to establish himself in Normandy. He thus became seigneur of the fief of Lestre, in the parish of Morsalines, between Valognes and the sea. From there in 1522 he repulsed the English who were landing at Urville-Tague to make a surprise attack on Cherbourg. He was a man of peace as well as of war and it was he who brought from his own country, on the shores of the Bay of Biscay, grafts of many of the best varieties of apple. One of these still bears his name, the *greffe de Monsieur de Lestre*, or *greffe de Monsieur*. That is not the only sort that remains to his credit in that country. He imported two varieties mentioned in the Journal, the Barbary and *l'epicé* (spice apple).

It was the cider made from this last apple that enchanted François I. You may read in a contemporary chronicle,

there is a kind of apple called *epicé* which makes cider so excellent that it is above all other ciders as the wine of Orleans is above *vin ordinaire*. The late great King François I, passing through Normandy in 1532,

added to his baggage a barrel of this cider, which he drank as he went, as long as it lasted.

Twenty years later Gilles de Gouberville sent to Morsalines for grafts of this apple. Today the *epicé*, which has disappeared from Morsalines, is still to be found at Mesnil-au-Val, and there are not a few admirers of the bon sire who have made the pilgrimage there to get grafts from the trees, offshoots of the very ones that he once planted.

To read the names of the apples that he grew, that he grafted, brings to you all the color and the perfume of their harvest. They began in August with the Couet and the Guillot-Roger and they continued until the end of the autumn, le Dameret, le Long-Pied, le Testonnet, le Gros-Doux, la Jumelle; in all, he mentions over forty varieties.

He raised them from seed, which was sown in February. The seedlings were set out in March. "Marin and Jehan Duval and Charlot planted 700 slips in the chapel garden. It was sunset when they finished." He grew them, not only for himself, but for his friends. "The servants of the Sieur de Saint-Naser took back a cartload of seedlings, in all 1,040, and to Quélon Berger I sent 102 seedlings to complete the little nursery that he made this year."

As to all the brotherhood of apple growers, his grafting was to him a very serious business. His tools were quite sacred. "Jehan Feullyé has given me a two-handled grafting knife from Flanders. If I like it, I pay him for it; if not, I return it." And again: "I went to Pottier at Tournlaville to have him make me some scissors and small saws for grafting." He took great pleasure in this hobby. "April 21, 1560 — I went to my nursery by the church where I spent three hours, all alone, grafting."

But it was especially in his planting at Gouberville in 1560 that we can best see the zest which he put into this work. On January 29, he had seedlings taken up at Mesnil and the

following day he sent a cartload to Gouberville and after lunch went himself with his men. "Arrived about three, we finished the day planting the garden near the church of Gouberville." February 1, he finished the planting and returned to Mesnil where on February 3, he set three of his men to taking up more seedlings. On February 4, they were sent to Gouberville where he followed. On the fifth, "I did not move from Gouberville; planted the seedlings in the field near the church and in the garden of the presbytery. The curé, the vicar, the captain worked all day." On February 11, he was back again at Gouberville with another cartload, which he planted on the twelfth and thirteenth. On the seventeenth, a fourth load arrived and on the eighteenth "we did not stop planting all day in the garden by the mill, the curé, the vicar, the captain and the others."

He supervised constantly, giving endless care to his orchards. In April he is scraping the moss, cutting the suckers, manuring the roots; and, when the trees are attacked by ants, he has the earth cleared away around the roots and sand put in its place. The abbé questions the value of this remedy and adds, "if he had used pepper, I would guarantee its success."

Cider-making season must have been a busy time at the manor. The notes on it fill pages of the Journal every year. The cider press was at work in all months from August to December. Before the season, there were old barrels to be mended and new ones made. The coopers came with their tools from Quettehou, from Saulsemeuil and Magneville, and found all ready for their work. There were the osiers from the garden by the grange which had been cut in March, to bind the casks; there were the staves which had been cut in May by young Louis at ten deniers a dozen, and the rounds for the ends; all of which were made by the coopers into those great casks, not perhaps "of excessive size, as are seen in good houses and abbeys, at Saint Étienne de Caen, at

Savigny and others," but such as would hold 900 or 1,000 quarts, and of these there must have been long rows standing on the cellar floor.

And it was not from mixed windfalls, but from chosen fruit of named varieties that he made his cider. He designates it by vintage; de Haye, de Testonnet, du Bosc, de Guillot-Roger, de Couet, de Durepel, de Marin-Onfroy as well as *de l'epicé*. This practice is still followed in some places. Near Avranches it is possible to get cider made of the best apple of the region, le Doux-au-Vasque.

In 1628 the President La Barre wrote a treatise on cider in which he naïvely says:

The apple is a fruit known to everyone for its beauty, its flavor and its quality. . . .

Man was judged guilty of *lèse majesté* for eating a forbidden fruit, supposed to have been the apple. . . .

The prohibition was only for our first parents. If it had been for us forever, the use of apples would have had an end and this fruit would have been banned, as is that which grows on the shores of the Dead Sea. . . .

But who it was who taught us to prize the apple, as we do in our country, no one knows. It is a point disputed between the people of Biscay and of Normandy. . . .

As for the invention of cider, the precious beverage; they say that a Norman having accidentally crushed an apple with his elbow, sucked the juice which gave him the idea.

This same good La Barre, after extending his travels through France and Italy, drinking the wines as he went, finally wrote: "All things considered, there is no drink better than the best cider. In taste, color and perfume, it is not excelled by the finest wines, whatever their price." But then, he was a Norman.

CHAPTER X

Sowing and Reaping, Flocks and Herds

This chapter is not for those who know only cities. It will have no interest for any but the country lover who sees his year in terms of the changing seasons. To them there will be confirmation of the pleasant and peaceful sense of continuity that comes from the labors of the rural year, in this record of a similar round at Mesnil-au-Val in the sixteenth century.

Today the fields of the manor keep the very names by which Gilles de Gouberville wrote of them, although the property is now broken up among many small farmers. We read of the sowing, the planting and the reaping, season after season, at the fields of the *Clos de Couvert*, at the *Clos de la Haute Vente* and *la Basse Vente*, at the *Clos des Croutes*, the meadow of *Lavigne-Liot*, of *Princes-Fouquets* and the *Bout-de-Bas*.

He was an experienced agriculturist, watching his land, changing his crops, fertilizing and plowing, harrowing and weeding; we see his men spreading his fields with the rich increment from his stables; with a compost formed of rotted leaves mixed with the scrapings from the pond bottoms; with seaweed, still so highly valued in Normandy and Brittany, which was carted from the sea at Tourlaville and Bretteville, drawn by two yoke of oxen; with sea sand, this for the grass at the "*pray de la Basse Vente*" to see if the hay will be any heavier there in a year, as "it is now very poor and thin"; and with chalk from his own limekilns. He burns over his fields before putting in his turnips, and has his men at work for days getting out roots, while he himself heads the boys from the village and manor to gather the stones from the fields that were only recently reclaimed.

As a large part of his horses and stock ranged wild in the forest beyond his outlying fields, it was necessary to look

well to his fences and walls, on which both hedgers and ditchers were working every year.

When all was ready for the seed, he began his sowing; the wheat was planted in November every year until 1558, when he writes on October 29, "I began the sowing . . . Nostradamus says in his almanac that this is a good day to start." Buckwheat and rye and oats were also sown, and clover at the *Closets-au-Choisy*. There was a second, March, sowing of oats and barley; also of turnips and beans to be used as winter feed for his animals. Besides these, there was the sowing in May of the hemp and flax.

The weeding of his crops was done mostly by the women of the manor and village, and he waged a constant war on moles. His mole catchers were always the same, one Jehan Lechevalier and his nephew, Loys. They are at work every month in the year, but especially in January. "I did my account with Jehan Lechevalier after supper and owe him 65 sols for thirteen score of moles, that he has taken in three weeks."

His harvesting began in July. He had as one of his seignorial rights that of the *corvée*, labor due him from the peasants on his estate, including the village.

I had it announced from the pulpit during the mass that those who owed me labor — "corvées" — should report here tomorrow.

August 11, 1553 — I sent 43 people from this parish to cut the wheat at the Haulte Vente where they were all day. Of these, 14 were men, the rest women.

He also sent someone from his household to call up the people of the villages of Le Teil, Bretteville, Digoville and Tourlaville, although it is not certain whether they owed him labor by right — *corvée de droit* — or only by courtesy — *corvée d'honneur*. The latter is still a custom, much as it was then, in many parts of France.

In addition to the local people, there were itinerant laborers, called *aoûterons* (Augusters), who arrived for the special

harvest work. In all, he had as many as a hundred hands, men and women, working at harvest time. Among them, it surprises us to find all the priests of the neighboring parishes.

The day before these reunions of workers, the Seigneur lays in his provisions.

August 18, 1554 — Jacques went to Cherbourg and brought back three quarters of beef which cost 15 sols.

August 20, 1558 — The butcher from Cherbourg came out and killed and dressed a steer, then left.

That was the day that he had fifty people from Digoville and Le Teil. After the feast they had a great party in the manor and "they were still there, in the hall, dancing until midnight"; not in the kitchen, but in the *salle* this time.

The wheat so sown and harvested from those fields of charming name, was threshed in his threshing barn which he let out, as he tells us: "I have leased my threshing barn at Maillard to Yan Vymart, my tenant at Saulxmesnil, for the thirteenth full measure of grain and a dinner at the winnowing."

His wheat once threshed and winnowed was carried to his mill, where he often assisted at the grinding.

January 16, 1554 — Sent Lajoye to Tocqueville to fetch Martin Birette to choose millstones for my mill at Mesnil.

November 16, 1554 — I was at the mill and had 2 measures of wheat ground in my presence to see the result, because I distrust the miller.

December 11, 1559 — Sent 5 measures of barley and 2 of wheat to the mill and was at the mill until all the grain was ground.

The next day he went to Cherbourg with Birette; "I bought a millstone of Guil. Symon, which cost me 26 livres tournoys on which I paid a sol, a denier to God and a teston on account"; he seems often to have been short of ready money, and in February he sent Jehan Bonamy at Cherbourg, "10

sols, to deduct from the 25 livres, 8 sols, 4 deniers that I owe him for the millstone."

In June or July there was the flax and the hemp to be pulled and laid to dry. There were full twenty processes for these alone, the very same in France in the sixteenth century, as those followed in ancient Egypt and in Belgium today; plucking up, and tying, drying, watering, beating and hackling, to get at the fiber of the flax for linen thread and of the hemp for rope. He never mentions his ropewalk; but we can imagine it, along the edge of a shady wood, the ropewalker pacing back and forth twisting the strand.

The workshops of his manor were busy places, where his carpenters and wheelwrights worked, turning out the *charettes* (two-wheeled carts), and *charrues* (four-wheeled carts); the wheelbarrows, which, since Pascal was not yet born to invent the one-wheeled variety of our gardens, still had two wheels and needed two men or more to push them; and the litters, with two wheels at one end, on which the happily inebriated were sometimes removed.

He was very fond of his workshops. Clément Ingouf made the cart bodies, and Phillipin Couppé, with two assistants, made the wheels, while he stood by, fascinated, to watch. They always kept a number of wheels in reserve, which gave rise to this entry:

Symonnet, Th. Drouet and Lajoie slept nearly all last night in the *Vigne du Sicquet*, to watch for a thief who on Sunday night stole a wheel and hid it there in the bushes where I found it today. About an hour after midnight Phillipin Hamel and his son Vincent came to the wood with fire to burn the wood of the wheel and take away the iron rim. They caught Hamel and his son and brought them here. He confessed that he had taken three planks and three wheels from the cart house here. They returned two. They had sold the other with some nails, to Séhier at Téil.

Thieves were so common that it was necessary to leave two

men sleeping in the fields after the crops were cut and until the harvest was in.

All the ordinary tools of our day are mentioned in his notes: sickles and scythes, flails and picks and pitchforks, rakes and shovels and spades, axes and saws. There was nothing lacking in the equipment of the manor for the successful running of a farming estate of the period.

As for stables and barns opening upon the great court after the manner prescribed by Estienne, he had them for his horses and mares and oxen and cows, for his sheep and goats and pigs. Old buildings were rebuilt or new ones erected with the help of his neighbors. He cut and planed his own timber, quarried his own stone and the slate for his roofs. Nails he had to buy, not by the pound, but by the thousand. The grange which he built, across the court from his house, must have been a fine structure, as he mentions the stone dormers in the roof and the stone roof-tree which capped it.

It would be interesting to know the extent of his flocks and herds. We find notes of the sale of forty sheep at one time and of one hundred at another, but one is inclined to think that he valued them chiefly for the wool they gave him. The shearing began early in May, and though the shepherd, Robin Feullyé, took charge, he had five women to help him. This was but the first of many processes that prepared the wool for the merchant, Thomas Quatorze, who came yearly from Paris, stopped several days at the manor, brought all the news of the capital, and purchased the fleeces before continuing on his way.

Part of the wool was kept for household use, dyed, carded and combed into small fleecy balls ready for spinning, it was then given out to women in the village, who spun the yarn, cleaned it, washed it and sent it to the weavers. Even then, as we may remember from our own *Piers Plowman's* words,

Cloth that cometh from the weavyng
 Is nought comely to were
 Till it be fulled under foot,
 or in fullyng stokkes,
 Washen well with water
 And with teasles craached,
 Y-tonked and y-tented spread,
 And under tailors made.

There was the flax, too, to be spun into thread and woven into linen for the body and the bed. Time did not lie idle on the hands of maid or matron at the manor.

Only the horses that were needed for riding and for farm work were kept in the stables. The greater part of his animals ran wild in the forest. He calls these herds his "bestes folles" and, although they were at large during most of the year, he had inclosures built of palisades, which he calls "parcs," into which they were driven at certain seasons for the branding of colts and calves.

He found great difficulty in rounding up his stock. "May 30, 1558. After dinner I took thirty men from this place to capture a mare and two colts. Richard Cauvin made us miss them." But, "on Sunday after Mass, I led about thirty of the men from here to the forest and we took a mare and two colts that belong to me. I treated them to 10 sols of wine at Hubert's for helping me."

There was a certain amount of danger in those forest expeditions which was probably an added attraction to the younger members of the family.

Sunday we went out, 36 of us, as many from the village as from the manor. We caught a black colt for me which Symonnet and Th. Quatorze led to the house. But we missed the mare for Th. Drouet; she knocked down Vincent Paris and trampled on him.

One day Symonnet and his friends managed to capture a band of mares, "which we have tried to take at least fifty times

in the last two years." Symonnet also caught a bad cold which sent him to bed.

One September day he went with Arnould to the forest, "to have a look at our beasts, but we could not find them anywhere, only the bull with the bell, which we had not seen for two months."

Usually when he went out with his men, he gave them lunch before starting. His generosity to all his dependents was one of his most agreeable qualities. When he paid the masons who came to help build his barn, he added a present of three hams to the money he gave them. He sent food and cider to the men who watched in the fields and he had an open hand in all his dealings, which must have endeared him to his people.

His breed of hardy Norman horses he sometimes bred to English sires and often to stallions from the Pays de Caux, a strain which was much valued for its endurance. His horses were well cared for and groomed, as many a note and purchase proves, and he called them by name, Cloppine, Tournebu, etc. At Russy he had a donkey, for what use we do not know, and the Sieur d'Agneaulx sent one day to the manor to find someone who could teach a mule how to amble.

If we could have spent a day with the bon sire at Mesnil, I am sure that after showing us his house, his stables and his barns, he would have led us to his garden, where he would have pointed out his pear trees, his cherry trees and his medlars, the grapes along the walls beyond the rows of vegetables; cabbages, beets, onions, spinach, peas, beans, turnips, pumpkins, lettuces and leeks. Though he never mentions them, surely he had herbs of all sorts in his borders, as well as pinks, for his *eau-de-Damas*. When he writes, "Chanteleur coming from Valognes brought me rose trees to plant," we wish that he had added their names. He loved flowers, and he enters in his Journal: "Sunday after mass, the vicar gave me a white rose picked in his garden"; and again: "Symmonnet

returning from Mass, brought me a white rose that Messire Auvrey sent me."

Among the fruits that he does not mention are apricots, figs, peaches, strawberries, raspberries and currants. Were they not yet known in Normandy? If they were known, how does it happen that he did not record receiving any or sending any as gifts, either to Madame de Saint-Naser to whom he always dispatched the first and best of his fruit, or to Madame Hemevez who sent him her finest apples, or especially to Madame la Duchesse de Bricquebec to whose favor he attached such importance? Peaches and raspberries at least were well known elsewhere by the sixteenth century.

From the garden, we might visit his beehives. Honey was more important in the household economy then than it is today. Sugar was a luxury, sold only by the apothecaries and, as we can read, a gift much appreciated by judges and lawyers to whom one offered it to insure their impartiality, shall we say? In the house, honey took the place of sugar.

"May 28, 1553 — After supper I sent Arnould and Drouet to get a swarm of bees from Messire Etienne Groult," who lived at Tournelville, and on the thirtieth he went himself after supper "to Messire Gallye; Symonnet, Maistre François and François Drouet with me, to buy a swarm of bees. When I wished to pay, he would not take any money." On June 14: "I had this evening a swarm of bees from Messire Jasper Troude and one from Messire Vincent Troude;" and on June 22 he went with Thomas Drouet to see Messire Jehan Gallye at Le Teil where he bought another "swarm which Thomas carried. At Coudre we met Messire Denys, which priest helped Thomas to carry the swarm." These five swarms were bought from five priests. Did they keep bees that they might also have wax for the candles on their village altars?

Gilles de Gouberville's bees pleased themselves well at

Mesnil-au-Val, and straining honey and running the wax into molds became yearly operations; ten years later we find the sire referring to his *jardin à mouche*,⁹ his special garden where the hives were kept. There, when it rained, the hives were covered with shallow earthenware pans made for the purpose by the potter at Saulsemesnil, and in the winter they were warmly shrouded against the cold. The strained honey was set away in honey pots made by the potter at Brix, and, once sealed, it kept perfectly.

October 10, 1562 — A servant came from Michael Donville to ask me to let him have some honey for his mistress, who is about to be confined. He told me that he had not been able to find a single drop anywhere. I gave him a pot of last year's honey. The honey was as firm as a rock. Yesterday at the Fair of Saint Denis, I refused 1 écu sol for two pots, from a man from Cherbourg who wanted it.

Through his intelligence and energy, his honey and wax became sources of revenue, as did all the products of his farm. There was not a fair or a market in the country where you could not find the produce from Mesnil-au-Val. On Mondays he sent his grain to the market at Cherbourg; on Wednesdays and Saturdays to Saint-Pierre-Église. His stock he sent on Saturdays to Montebourg; where there is still on the seventeenth of each month a large horse fair. These were weekly markets. The fairs, all of which are still held yearly, with the exception of two, were January 3, Sainte Geneviève; April 24, Saint George at Les Pieux; May 31, La Pernelle; June 12, Saint Naser at Gréville; June 26, Saint Jehan at Vicel; June 29, Saint Paul des Sablons; July 4, at Formigny; July 18, Saint Clair at Nacqueville; August 17, the large fair at Guibray; August 24, Saint Bartélemy at Hardinvast; August 24, at Rauville-la-Plage; September 14, Saint Croix at Virandeville; September 17, Saint Croix at Bayeux; September 25, Saint Frémin at Valcanville; September 29, Saint Michael at Estoubleon; October 9, Saint Denis

at Brix; October 17, at Boutteville; and November 25, at Bricquebec.

These fairs were then, even more than now, gathering places for business and for amusement. "Early this morning we started for the Fair of Saint Jehan at Vicel. Cantepye and Lajoie with me. We had dinner in the tent with Maux, Billon and Agneaulx and Nicollas le Blond." That might be written of the Fair at La Pernelle this very year. There around the pilgrimage chapel, which stands on the height facing the sea, and back through the lanes and the fields, over the breezy common, you will see a forest of tents and below every tent flap rows of feet of farmers and servants eating their midday meal. Of Negreville, he writes:

After seeing the dances and the wrestling, present Saint-Levet, the Seigneur de Negreville, his wife and their children, Madame de Saint-Remy and her daughters and some others, the Curé de Meurray and his brother, I took leave of the company about six o'clock and came home.

What seems to characterize the people whom we meet day after day in the Journal, is the pleasure they take in life. There is a gusto in living. Every event becomes the excuse for merrymaking: marrying, christening, the harvest, the hunt and every market day and fair. A great deal of the joy of life took flight when the Protestant religion came in, as it soon did, not only killing simple pleasures, but darkening all the country with the horror of civil war.

CHAPTER XI

The Hunt

The hunt, to use the word in its primitive sense, has filled a large place in the life of the country gentleman in all times and all countries, and at the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val, *la chasse* in one form or another was part of the daily round.

The crossbow was the common weapon of the moment and it was not till the beginning of the seventeenth century that the Companies of Archers were disbanded. The crossbow had one advantage over firearms, from the poacher's point of view, that of silence. The state owned the forests, and strictly preserved the game. In 1553 Gilles de Gouberville, returning from a walk to the forest at Digoville, where he had been to have a look at five fine oaks which he had had cut down,

found Nicollas du Bosc and two other young men with him. Du Bosc had a crossbow, cord and arrows which I took from him, as he was on forbidden ground.

September 24, 1554—As some of my people were returning from La Boussaye, they found a young deer dead in the bushes. They had lost their way and were off the road. It had been killed yesterday by a crossbow. It was a four-year-old.

Even his own retainers were not innocent of poaching.

June 13, 1560, they came to tell me that a warrant is out for Thomas Drouet, because he has been seen in the forest with a drawn crossbow on the track of game.

These crossbows were made in the villages, but, if one wished, one could get a crossbow from a good maker, a gunsmith such as Jehan Rouxel at Cherbourg. Firearms had been known for some time in France, and the arquebus and the pistol were in the hands of Gilles de Gouberville and his friends though they were hardly in common use.

January 11, 1558 — While Thomas was waiting at Pottier's to get his crossbow mended, Monroy [the Marshal of the Guard at Cherbourg] and one of the sons of Monsieur de Cyffrevast came in and asked Pottier if he knew how to make a pistol and said that, when Pottier next goes to Valognes, he can stop at the Manor of Cyffrevast and they will show him one.

The arquebus was made with a steel wheel which, in turning, struck sparks from a flint and ignited the powder.

One of the duties of the Lieutenant des Eaux et Forêts was to authorize and organize wolf hunts. Wolves were a pest at that time. An edict of Henri III reads:

Wolves have increased in such numbers that they devour not only the cattle in the farmyards and stables of the King's subjects, but place even little children in danger; it is therefore enjoined upon masters and lieutenants [des Eaux et Forêts] that three times a year they assemble one man from each house in each parish in their district with arms and dogs for the pursuit of these same wolves.

June 5, 1555 — As we were sitting on the bench near the Château at Cherbourg, the Sieur de Couriac brought me a permit for a wolf hunt which he asked me to sign.

Such a permit was necessary, as parts of the forest were forbidden to trespassers, a rule that the wolves might not regard.

The manner of conducting these wolf hunts was as follows: all the men of several parishes met and marched off to the place where the wolves were known to be, surrounded them in a huge circle, walking inwards, blowing horns, beating kettles and making as much din as possible, until finally the wolves, bewildered, fell into their hands.

January 5, 1557 — Symonnet, Thomas Drouet and Gilles Auvray went to Fermanville where they were having a wolf hunt.

April 13, 1561 — Symonnet and Noël went to the wolf hunt at Blaqueville where they got a very large wolf.

Near at hand, close to the manor, they were a constant menace.

December 26, 1553 — As I was returning from Mass, Jehan Paris told me that he had found a stag eaten by wolves near the Vente du Fest. I told him to come and fetch me after dinner. He came about sunset, after vespers. I went with him and Jacques Auvray. We found it, its hindquarters eaten by wolves, as it seems by the tracks in the snow. I cut off the head.

October 17, 1556 — Towards evening, as I was at the edge of the wood, I heard a young pig squealing. I ran quickly and found one of the pigs from Jehan Paris' drove which a wolf had bitten in the belly, throat and leg.

December 24, 1556 — Arnould returning from Montebourg saw a wolf at Crabet which followed him.

May 18, 1558 — Sunday of Pentecost, a wolf got in and stole a lamb. Roquincourt, Symonnet and others chased it till it dropped the lamb, which they left. A little later the wolf returned for its prey and Symonnet shot it with his arquebus.

October 25, 1559 — Pierre and Jehan Groult came from Digoville. They brought the skin of a wolf they had caught last night in their farmyard eating the geese. I gave them 4 sols and 4 sols that I told them to give to Sauvage of Tourlaville and 2 sols that Maistre Guillaume de Belleville gladly gave them.

This was evidently prize money.

May 6, 1560 — Arnould went to Cherbourg with the skin of one of his mares killed by wolves in the wood.

November 7, 1562 — Arnould going to the wood with Bertin found that the wolves had eaten two of our pigs in the field of Saint-Martin.

November 15, 1562 — Arnould went to Brix to fetch the skin of a cow that the wolves had killed.

There are many more such entries, but we have given enough to show what a plague the beasts were and how necessary it was to be on the alert with arquebus and crossbow.

Those must have been stirring times. No wonder the sire had a small cannon mounted at the manor to use for signaling.

December 14, 1557 — Cabesson, Symonnet and Jacques went to the woods, hunting. It was two in the morning before they came back. And

as I was afraid that they had lost their way, I had Drouet fire the canon twice.

The powder for his firearms he at first bought; later he made it at the manor. He bought the mortars and pestles to grind it at Gonneville, where they were made.

The forest of Brix and the woods around the manor harbored plenty of game. Wild boars were common. It would seem that he had only to go out of his door to run into them.

December 9, 1554 — The boys here going in the evening to the Vallée du Grand Jardin had a greyhound with them, which took a young boar. When it was brought in and dried, I weighed it — a little more than 30 pounds.

October 4, 1555 — Symonnet took to the tax receiver a quarter of venison of a boar, which the boys took with the greyhounds in the big garden where it came to eat the apples.

The next day, Symonnet was off to Valognes to present M. de Heurtebye with half the boar and the boar's head.

December 28, 1554 — My cousin de Raffoville and his followers and dogs went coursing a hare on the heath at Saint-Mor, Symonnet with them. It was nightfall when they returned, bringing a young female boar and its pig of this year that their greyhounds had luckily taken on the track of the hare which took to the forest. The next day they left, taking the pig and the boar's head, but leaving the rest, as I wished.

The roebuck was rarer and that may be why he kept for himself the only one of which there is any mention. Deer were plentiful. When he went into the forest to round up his stock, his dogs were always leaving him to course the deer.

June 4, 1556 — Cantepye went home to return tomorrow by Bricquebec to find Bernaulde, who has been lost since Saturday of Pentecost, when she went after a deer that she found in the wood, when we were after the stock.

Dappled deer seem to have been unknown in Normandy then. Gilles de Gouberville, however, had a tame one.

March, 1563 — Jehan Lechevalier and his nephew Loys, came from

England where they had been for two years and brought me a dappled deer.

This present was perhaps a return to Gilles de Gouberville for keeping and feeding their mare for them during their absence. Anyway, Gilles de Gouberville was very proud of his pet and took great care of it; becoming very annoyed with the children who threw stones at his "English deer." It came, however, to a sad end.

September 3, 1560 — My uncle wrote to ask me to send some game, as it is the wedding on Sunday of Sieur de Couvert, son of the late Sieur de Creulet, with one of the daughters of the late Sieur de Virville de Valloys.

This proves that guests invited to such feasts were supposed to contribute a share and that the Sieur de Russy wished to conform to the custom.

To satisfy his uncle, Gilles de Gouberville sent to his cousin de Tocqueville to borrow a pointer to shoot some partridges, but dogs and hunters took nothing, which was a bad omen for the *daim d'Angleterre*.

Seeing that I could get no other game, I decided to kill my stag and they went out to bring it in. It became so excited that they had to half drag, half carry it. After supper it was killed Lacroix and Guillaume Pottel had never seen one before. It was the fattest beast that I have ever seen.

The next day, he sent Lajoye to Russy to carry the right hind quarter and the left fore quarter to his uncle.

At Mesnil-au-Val today, all that remains of the old manor which we know so well in the Journal, is the round tower by the entrance gate. Here in the dovecote above the small chapel there were pigeons in such numbers, as at Gouberville, that the droppings were used as manure for the fields. He sent dozens of them as presents to his lawyer, especially during his lawsuits, and to his draper in Cherbourg.

Curiously enough, the top of the round dovecote was open,

instead of being covered with a pepper-pot roof as it now is, and as we usually see on dovecotes in France. In the winter, flocks of starlings came, drove out the pigeons and settled in the comfortable pigeonholes, and he was obliged to protect his pigeons against the audacity of these impudent invaders. Again and again we read the same entries in the months of January and February, at Mesnil, Russy and Gouberville. "After supper, we covered the top of the dovecote and took three bushels of starlings, because they have driven out all the pigeons."

There was an abundance of wild life in this rich farming land near the sea. Bittern, partridge, red-legged partridge, heron, woodcock, snipe, quail, crake, wild duck, wild swan, wild geese, curlew, larks, plover (*courleyen*), all fell to their bows.

By the marshy pool at Tourlaville, Symonnet, who was a great shot, killed a wild goose which was sent as a present to M. de Heurtebye, tutor of the children at the Château de Valognes, and another day he shot a heron there.

Every separate entry has a color of its own:

Drouart took six partridges at the Haulte-Vente which he brought alive to my room before I was up. I let the old hen and the young cock go after cutting a nail of the right claw to recognize them if we take them again.

The woodcock had for him an interest other than as game: "It was at the hour of the woodcock's flight [*vol de vitecoc*] when I left Vauthiers."

April 20, 1554 — As I passed the moat in the great garden at Princes-aux-Advocats, I saw a wild duck leading twelve little ones. I took them and brought them all home with me.

July 26, 1560 — I arranged with my cousin, the barrister to go with me to Gattemare after cygnets.

It is rather disturbing from our point of view to read of the many objects used for catching birds and the smaller animals. One wonders how any bird escaped the toils. There was, first, the great net, which took several men to set up, used to stop the flight of birds at nightfall, flocking to their accustomed roosts. There were other nets which are difficult to identify with any used now; the *ré saillant*, which was set for sparrows; the *yragne* to catch blackbirds; and there was birdlime made from holly. There were traps set for foxes, badgers, rabbits and hares.

Besides their nets and traps, they had other aids for hunting: dogs, ferrets and hawks.

It goes without saying that Gilles de Gouberville loved dogs. It is plain to see in his notes how proud and fond he was of them. First in importance were his greyhounds, but he had hounds, pointers, spaniels, water spaniels, and a watch dog. They are often mentioned by name, among them being Colliche, Soudart, Bernaude, Bureau, Escarlotte, Verdault, Trousee, Pitayne, Belle Isle, Hirault, Serpent, Bise, Oisette, Ohire, Martine and Courette.

He bred his dogs with care, getting the best strains that he could find in the country. The puppies were boarded out, to be trained.

I sent Guillaume Lesage to Brillevast to take two puppies, one to board with Julian Vallognes, the other as a present to my cousin Barville.

Moysson came back from his uncle's, where he had taken a puppy to board.

Cosme Dubosc, the farmer at Hatteville, took away a puppy that I gave him to board.

One Robert Borde, an English falconer, evidently made a business of bringing over English-bred dogs to Normandy.

August 20, 1553 — Robert Borde came by here taking 4 dogs, which he had brought from England to Cuves.

September 4, 1553 — Before I was up, Robert Borde arrived with two great dogs — red — that he had brought me from England.

The next day "as soon as it was light, Cantepye, Symonnet, Moysson and Robert Borde went hunting, to see how the two dogs would run."

A few days later, they all went to Saint-Mor to meet "the Captain from Cherbourg who came to see the dogs run that Robert brought from England."

Dogs were part of the appanage of a gentleman's establishment and a right royal gift.

April 15, 1562 — Monsieur de Saint-Naser going to Rouen took with him a hound, the best of his pack, to give to the Sieur du Mesnil Vasse.

July 29, 1562 — Lajoye tells me that today Dorin des Essarts passed through Russy with dogs that the Sieur de La Ferté-Fresnay (who is a hostage in England) had sent to him.

September 20, 1553 — I have given two of my dogs to Sieur Pierre Dossés which he is sending by sea to Bordeaux to Captain Lane, his cousin.

The pack at Mesnil-au-Val had a reputation in the country. The sire was often asked for the loan of his dogs.

October 24, 1553 — Maître Guillaume Cabart begged me to lend him some men and dogs to take some game, as Sunday is the day of his *fiançailles* with Gratienne, daughter of Collin Dancel, niece of the Viconte de Valognes. Cantepye, Symonnet and Morisseau went hunting the next day to Bretteville for him and got three hare and lunched with four of the Cabart boys.

September 26, 1554 — Symonnet took my dogs to Cyffrevast for the Count de Tende, who had asked me to send them for hunting today.

October 23, 1558 — Symonnet and Gilles Auvray took Verdault, Trousse and Colliche to Salsemesnil for the Captain of Cherbourg who asked for the loan of them.

When the dogs were wounded by wolves or wild boars, as they often were, the greatest care was given them.

December 26, 1561 — Symonnet went off to the wood, where he

found a boar which wounded both Bureau and Escarlotte and Gilles Auvray's watch dog. I am afraid that they may die.

Bureau certainly did not die, as his name continues to appear for several years to come.

Here is a remedy for rabies. "This morning Symonnet and Lajoye went to Bretteville to take our dogs to the sea, because on Saturday they were bitten by a mad dog."

Their greyhounds were their most useful hunting dogs. With them they coursed hare and wolves and wild boar. Rather ferocious, they must have been:

December 21, 1552 — Found one of my bulls nearly killed by de Raffoville's greyhounds.

It was at daybreak that the young men of the household usually went coursing with the dogs. They were also adepts at another form of sport, tracking game, hare or wild boar.

January 3, 1553 — Symonnet and Noël went tracking game. Ice everywhere and much snow.

All this informal hunting does not mean that there was no *équipage de chasse* in the country. Here is a description of a stag hunt with Madame la Duchesse de Bricquebec's pack on January 28 and 29, 1553.

After mass I went to Sottevast on business. While we were talking in the square, Pontperrin and other huntsmen belonging to Madame de Bricquebec arrived with the hounds on their way to sleep at the Manor of Digoville. Thomas Drouet was with them. Soon after, the Sieurs de Grâtot, de Breuilly, de Saint-Hilarye, Le Pont and their followers appeared. They are going to run a stag tomorrow at Digoville. I invited them to eat and sleep here. I left there with them. We were about to sit down to dinner when de Billon arrived, who supped and slept here with the others.

The next morning I got up three hours before day to arrange for the breakfast. They breakfasted about daybreak and then went off to the Manor of Digoville to hear what Jacques and Marbone had found. They said they had not found anything, that there was no game there.

In spite of this, Symonnet, Billon, Gilles Auvray, François Dauge and Pont Perrin set forth and found a fine stag, started by Billon's dog. At once all the company were off, after the remounts had been sent up.

The stag came out at Paris-Fouchart and put out the eye of my greyhound Escarlotte, which Gilles Auvray had left behind as he had been told to do. The company were all off after the hounds and I came back with Symonnet and François Dauge to look after my wounded dog.

This note, perhaps better than any in the Journal, gives an idea of the scale on which Gilles de Gouberville lived. He could receive *à l'improviste* a large company like this and entertain them worthily. Here are the Sieur de Grâtot from that lovely manor near Coutances, who had come more than fifty miles to the hunt, and other gentlemen of noble name, with their followers, their horses and dogs. We know what resources Gilles de Gouberville had at his command and we can imagine how the men and maids must have set to, under his direction, to prepare that feast. We can imagine, too, the robust talk that followed, of hunting and shooting and hawking. For as falconry was the sport of kings, so was hawking that of the country gentleman. Their best hawks came from England, brought over by that same Robert Borde who imported the hounds. Many were the stories that must have circled the board in the kitchen of Mesnil that night, after the company had eaten their fill of the capon and the venison pasties, washed down by long draughts of the host's famous cider. Gargantua voiced the creed of the moment: "Si je ne boy, je suis à sec, me voila mort, mon âme enfuira. En sec jamais l'âme n'habite." Such was the spirit of hearty humor and jest with which the guests that night filled the great hall, recounting their "belles vanteries et rhodomontades soldatesques," mingled with the lore and wisdom of the soil.

CHAPTER XII

Social Life

Throughout the pages of the Journal, enlivening the daily round of farm and household and public duties, runs a thread of romance and human interest. Betrothals, weddings, home-comings, christenings, village fêtes and processions give a lead to the fancy which is not hard to follow. This, especially, since we soon become familiar with the names of the villagers and the family and friends and share in the excitement and pleasure of these events. But if the bon sire interests us with his descriptions, he exasperates us by his omissions. We cannot read what he has written of one neighbor or another without wanting to know more.

About five kilometers to the west of Mesnil-au-Val was the Manor of Teil, snugly set in a valley between wooded hills.

Sunday, December 2 — About nine in the morning, I started with Symonnet, for Têil to the betrothal of the oldest daughter of Captain du Têil with Jehan, son of Jehan Liot. We found a large company assembled: of the bride's party were the Prior of Taille, the mother-in-law of the captain and others; of Liot's party, were the Sieur de Bretteville and his wife and others. After the betrothal we had dinner, then we came home. Gave 5 sols to the minstrels and 1 sol to the priest who brought us the holy water while we were at dinner.

There you have it. The assemblage from all the country around. Jehan Liot came from Bretteville, on the coast near Cherbourg, and the occasion was graced by the presence of the Seigneur de Bretteville himself. There was first the betrothal, regarded as binding as the marriage service, followed by a ceremonious feast, blessed by the priest with his holy water, but terminated by music and song and, though the sire does not mention it this time, dancing. Then the return home

through the narrow country lanes before the dark of the early winter evening.

This was the beginning of the celebration which, the next year, accompanied the marriage of the same young girl. Both the betrothal and the marriage took place on Sunday, a practice no longer allowed by the Catholic Church.

Sunday, November 17, 1555 — Early in the morning I started for the house of Captain du Têil, Symonnet and Girot Maillard with me. We found the Sieur de Sausmesnil and many other people there. We breakfasted, then mounted our horses (it was raining hard) and all proceeded in a great company to escort the Captain's oldest daughter to her marriage at Bretteville, in the Chapel of Saint Martin, where we found the old Abbé of Cherbourg and many other notable people, as many men as women. The ceremony over, we all dined and supped at Liot's. There were present the Sieur de Bretteville, his mother and wife, the Curé of the place who had married the young couple; etc. We were to the number of a hundred, at four tables, in the great upper room, with a fireplace at each end. It was midnight when we left.

What a cavalcade that must have been, through the deep lanes of November, the eight kilometers across country from Teil to the sea at Bretteville, and in the rain. All their fine wedding garments protected from the wet, let us hope, by *collets* of leather. Only a week later we see Gilles de Gouberville off to another wedding in Mesnil-au-Val where "eighty people sat down at three tables."

The day before the Liot wedding the bon sire had sent a present of "2 rabbits, 2 ducks, 2 teal and 4 partridge." So, on September 29, 1554, he had sent Lajoie to carry "2 rabbits, 1 hare and a venison pasty" to Denys Lorion "for the wedding feast of his son who marries the daughter of Gratian Alexandre, Sieur de la Noël." If all the guests were equally generous, these entertainments cannot have been too great a drain upon the hosts.

When there happened to be a marriage among the peasants in his village, the presents from the manor were unfailing,

though in keeping with the circumstances of the recipients: "I sent Tassine Quentin 1 bushel of wheat, 1 pumpkin and 2 dozen pears for the wedding dinner of her son."

Even now in the French provinces, two days is the usual term for wedding festivities; then, there were many occasions when the celebrations continued for several days. One of such was the wedding in Mesnil-au-Val of Jehan Freret.

I both dined and supped at Loys Freret's at the wedding feast of his son. It was ten o'clock when I left. I gave 5 sols to the singers and 1 sol to Quelon the shepherd who recited a Christmas piece.

The next day I returned to dinner at Freret's with yesterday's company. After dining and dancing, I gave 5 sols to the cook who had served the banquet.

Later in the evening that young scapegrace of a Symonnet, with Cantepye to abet him, went in masquerade to the house of the bride's father at Mesnil, then on to Captain du Teil's manor and others, on a madcap round of rollicking fun after the two days of celebration.

In the following entries we learn of an odd custom concerning the dressing of the bride. Girls of all conditions, it would seem, appeared on their wedding day in jewels and finery borrowed from their friends.

November 24, 1554 — I went to Tocqueville to ask for some ornaments for the daughter of Jehan Lebourgoys, Sieur de Gruchy, who is to be married Saturday.

Three days later,

I went to Hemevez where my cousin gave me some rings and ornaments that I had asked for to adorn the daughter of Le Borgoyes who on Saturday is marrying Michael Fortin de Helleville. We had dinner there and came back by Valognes where Mlle de Surville gave me some more ornaments which I had asked her for.

November 30 — I went after dinner to Le Bourgoys at Esquedreville, where my sister de Saint-Naser arrived soon after me. We supped, then I presented them with the garments and the jewels that had been loaned me. It was after eleven before we got back here.

It was not till December 7 that the borrowed finery was all returned by him to its owners.

When the village girls of Mesnil were to be married, they came to the manor to be dressed for the ceremony by the hands of the gentle Guillemette.

Sunday, May 27, 1554 — When I came back from Gouberville, I found Les Hachées here. Soon after, Jehanne arrived, daughter of the late Raullet Vaultier, with a number of other young girls and women who came to see her dressed for her wedding with Guillaume Mesnage, which took place today. Cantepye, Guillemette and Lajoie went with me. We dined and supped at Mesnage's house.

Today in France the simplest wedding awakens sympathetic interest in any little town, and all stop to see the white-veiled bride and her young husband, followed by the wedding party, trail across the road from the mayor's office to the church. She would have had a prettier reception at Mesnil in 1550, when, "after vespers, the young girls did a dance and the wife of Nicolas Quentin sang a song in honor of Georgette, who is a newly wedded bride."

As for the festivity which the bon sire calls the *bienvenue*, it was the arrival of the bride in her new home. In September 1554, he sent Lajoie for a jar of *hippocras* which cost 20 sols, which he carried to

the *bienvenue* of the wife of the Sieur de Barville, daughter of l'Esleu Borlande and my late cousin his wife; there were present the Sieur de la Vernode, Beusseville-sur-Le-Vay, Boys-Froul and his brother the Canon, Maître Pierre Jenne, Procureur du Roi, le Sieur de Vast, le Sieur de Bretteville, de Reneville, the Curé d'Hauteville, the Verdier of Valognes, my cousin de Fermanville, the damoyselle, wife of Sieur Esleu, the Damoyselle du Boys-Froul, the Damoyselle de Surville, Baucquet, the wife of the Procureur, the wife of the tax collector and many other gentlemen and damoyselles.

I venture to give that list for the fine roll of the names which he wrote with such gusto.

Christening parties were equally great occasions of reunion

and rejoicing. He received invitations from far and near to these festivities and was one of the company at the baptism of the infant daughter of his cousin, de Hemevez. The god-mother was Mademoiselle de Saint-Pol, daughter of that great lady, the Duchesse de Nevers at Bricquebec, who brought with her three other young demoiselles. "Just before sunset we all went to the church where the little girl was baptized by Saint-Germain, Canon of Coutances, and called Marye after Mademoiselle de Saint-Pol. That done, we all returned to supper." *Les relavailles* was the name for a christening party.

What now of the festivity known as the *recroc*, which was usually a *recroc de nocces* — a party given in return for hospitality received; such a *recroc* was the banquet offered by the Captain Du Teil (who had started the ball rolling some months before with the betrothal party) in return for the wedding feast given on his daughter's wedding by her father-in-law, Jehan Liot.

Very frequently in the course of the year the manor was visited by a long procession, winding through the lanes, carrying banners, singing canticles, coming from the church at Mesnil to the Chapel of Saint Gilles as their first station, before taking their way on to Digoville, Tourlaville and Bretteville. They always came on the great fêtes, common to all Catholic faith, Rogations, when they beat the bounds of the parishes and sang blessings on the fields of Mesnil; on Saint Mark's Day and Corpus Christi when the Seigneur himself held one of the cords to steady the *reposoir* in which they carried the Host through the greenwood; in the month of June to the chapel in the courtyard, where the walls of the house and barns would be hung with Guillemette's best linen sheets decorated with fern and bouquets of bright field flowers, while the pathway of the Presence would be strewn with herbs and flower petals.

In June, too, came Saint John's Eve, when in every parish

the fires of Saint John burnt on the hilltops, a great occasion for village rejoicings which often ended, as the sire notes, in blows, when the moment came to seize the last embers to carry home to the village hearths.

Every year, too, in the big kitchen, the Fête des Rois was celebrated with the traditional cake, which sometimes came from the pastry cook at Cherbourg, sometimes from Valognes; besides which, his miller never failed to send him one as a gift. It was the sire who cut the cake, at the end of supper, among all the household, and he remembered to record the name of the lucky one who "was king."

There were many special saints' days as well, and sometimes we seem to read between the lines that they were rather inconvenient, as on that tenth of August when the Procession of Saint Laurent arrived and "after mass, I hurried my servants off to the fields where the hay is in danger." These processions were not all in summer, for Saint Sebastian's Day falls on January 20, when he says, "It is very cold. The procession came to our chapel" and we feel the unwritten corollary, that a shivering hour was spent there.

But the great celebration of the year at the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val was on September 1, Saint Gilles' Day, the name day of the bon sire, the day of his patron saint. This day was celebrated with great solemnity; high mass was said in the chapel by one of the curés of the neighborhood, followed by a sermon preached by one of the Cordeliers from the monastery at Valognes. These brothers came in pairs, arriving the day before to sing vespers. After the sire's religious duties were thus fulfilled, he dedicated the rest of the day to his guests, his family, the clergy and families of the neighborhood, whose names are given every year.

Preparations for the great dinner went on for days beforehand, the almost sacrificial killing and the purchase of wine and beer, to pour the libation. The cooking of the banquet

was not trusted to the cook of the house, but confided to a *cordon bleu* from Valognes or to "Violet from Cherbourg," who was paid the considerable sum of ten sols.

At the end of the dinner — we should like to know whether it was spread in the kitchen, in the *salle* or in the courtyard — the host presented the ladies, his guests, and the girls and women of the parish, with birthday favors in the shape of purses and ribbon and, especially, pins, which he bought for the occasion in thousands.

The fête coming as it did nearly at the end of the harvest, the seigneur took a yearly pride in offering his guests some of the freshly-threshed grain; so that as well as a celebration in his honor, it seems to have partaken of the character of a harvest festival in which everyone in the parish took part.

And now, we can actually record one of his annual distractions, as I think we may call it, in which food does not figure; that is, a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages were common practices in his day and he mentions others of his friends and family as going on pilgrimages to Saint Fiacre (who was then the patron of children, although he has since been appropriated by the gardeners to guard their cabbages and roses), to Notre Dame d'Asnières, and elsewhere.

But the special pilgrimage of which he gives us an account was made on October 13, 1555, to the church at Brix. The day before he ordered one of his farmers at Gouberville to bring him the complete costume of a sailor. On the morning of the day, he writes,

As soon as I got up I started for Brix, dressed as a sailor as I did not wish to be recognized, in company with Myaux Gaillard, Th. Drouet, Gilles Auvrey and Lajoie. We arrived there as Mangon, Curé of Valognes was saying the mass, assisted by several others from Valognes. After mass, we went to Lesville's where we drank a cup, for which I paid 4 sols 3 deniers.

Why did he wish to disguise himself? How could he imagine

that a sailor's dress would hide his identity from the people of a countryside who all knew him well? And why did he undertake this pilgrimage? The abbé suggests that it was to ask intercession on his behalf for the journey to Blois which he must make two months later. At any rate, he leaves us both amused and mystified at this picture of himself which he so naïvely gives us.

Although the bon sire was fond of receiving his friends, he enjoyed visiting them as well, and here is the account of one short visit to that favorite "nièce de Cresnays" in August 1561. From Mesnil he rode south to Coutances where he slept at the Lion Vert. The next day he took the road to Villedieu, stopping to drink a glass at the house of the Sieur La Surye, and then on to sleep at Cresnays.

We found my niece at the door, the third daughter of the Baron d'Ingrande with her and the house full of gentlemen who were supping and sleeping there, such as La Pigaciére and his brother, La Rochelle, Le Plessis and others. The Sieur de Cresnays gave us a great welcome and told me that Madame d'Ingrande and her other two daughters had gone to sup at Brécé where they might sleep.

Tuesday XXVI — Before I was out of my room Madame d'Ingrande and her two elder daughters returned from Brécé with the Sieur de la Bellefontaine and the Sieur de Saint-Vigor. All the company dined, supped and slept at Cresnays.

Wednesday XXVII — After breakfast Madame d'Ingrande and her company went to dinner at Saint-Poys, Monsieur de Cresnay and my cousin La Pigaciére with them. In the afternoon the priest of Cresnays killed a heron in one of the ponds belonging to the house.

Thursday XXVIII — I sent Cantepye back to Mesnil and I remained at Cresnays expecting my cousin de Tocqueville, who arrived about eleven. After dinner, I gave XV sols to the servants at Cresnays, then we mounted our horses, my cousin de Tocqueville, Chaslus and I and went on to Vire where we slept at the Croix Blanche.

Just as at Mesnil, there was in all these manors a constant coming and going of friends and relations. It was necessarily so in a day when the accommodation in the towns must have

left much to be desired. Here at Madame de Cresnays', we find a house full of ladies and gentlemen and we get the feeling from this visit, as from the one that the bon sire made at the time of his godson's christening, that these were less simple folk, more of the world, than he.

The Sire as Seigneur

At the time of which we read in the Journal, the King of France was in Touraine, and where the King was, there was the seat of government, were he hunting at Chambord, enjoying the beauties of Chenonceau with Diane de Poitiers, or living at Blois with the Queen. At Blois in the great pillared hall, opening on the courtyard, he convoked the *états* — the representatives of the three estates, nobles, clergy and commoners — for the country.

The *états* of Normandy were held at Rouen; those of the Bessin at Caen; and we have a valuable note in Gilles de Gouberville's Journal, establishing the fact that the *états* of the Cotentin — two representatives, noble and commoner, from each of the five vicontés, Avranches, Coutances, Cherbourg, Carentan and Valognes — met at Saint-Lô.

On Wednesday, May 7, 1561, Cantepye and Symonnet returned from Valognes to tell him that he had been elected by the nobles of the viconté of Valognes to represent them at the *états* at Saint-Lô, which were convoked for May 24.

The week after his election was passed in making purchases, black velvet (the mercer, who tried to cheat him on the measure, had to measure it six times over), scarlet cloth to line his hose, black taffeta and a handsome new hat for which he paid the considerable sum of xxx sols. Girard, the tailor, arrived at the manor on the nineteenth, was paid his xxi sols on the twenty-third, and on May 24 at daybreak, the sire, dressed in his new and fitting apparel, started for Saint-Lô, accompanied by Cantepye, Thoysnet and Pinchon. On the way they were joined by the Sire de Tamerville and his wife who had a house in Saint-Lô, where Gilles de Gouberville dined the next day, not forgetting to present his host with a "pot de vin."

In the afternoon, with the other representative from Valognes, Maître Pierre Collas, the lawyer, he proceeded to the hall, where the convocation was held. Of the presiding officers (*sieurs présidiaux*) only three were present, including de Tamerville; the members from Avranches and Coutances were absent and the meeting was therefore adjourned till the next day at ten.

In the morning, the bon sire returned to the hall, to find only one of the *présidiaux* and a clerk. The meeting was adjourned till that afternoon, at four.

At four, they were more numerous, but not more successful in dispatching their business; when he and Pierre Collas arrived, the *présidiaux*, the Sires Du Féron, de Tamerville, de La Grange, de La Bretonnière and another whom he "did not know" were in session, where they remained for two hours before admitting the representatives. As the awaited deputies from Avranches and Coutances had not appeared, the meeting was adjourned for a week, with a note that the absent members were to be informed that they "must obey the will of the king."

Eight days later, the journey was repeated in very warm June weather, when the recalcitrant representatives were present and there was a successful sitting.

It would seem that the representatives of the vicontés had but little part in the debates, if they were admitted only after the *présidiaux* had been in session for two hours. This time, the sire returned from Saint-Lô to Russy across country, passing San, the manor of the Sire de Grouchy, at sunset, where he had a drink without dismounting, although the seigneur begged him to spend the night.

It was the exclusive privilege of the nobles to bear arms, to defend king and soil and country. All those who were liable for service in the royal army were called at stated times by *ban*, (proclamation), to the *monstre* (muster). "Novem-

ber 1, 1555 — All gentlemen of the Cotentin are summoned to Saint-Lô on Sunday at ten for the *monstre*." This service derived from the property which the nobles held from the crown and upon the origin and conditions of its possession. The Manor of Mesnil-au-Val was registered as furnishing, "one archer mounted and armed."

As a noble and holder of lands from the King, Gilles de Gouberville was on the roll for Gouberville and Mesnil, in the Cotentin, and Russy in the Bessin. He was of those who were called up to report at certain intervals, at Saint-Lô, Coutances, Bayeux or Caen—to the military authorities. Every man on these lists was supposed to appear in person. The importance of this law may be judged by the penalty for non-appearance. An order of Francis I of 1534 reads,

The absent sending substitutes to answer for them, the substitutes in place of the others will be hung and strangled by their necks, and those who have sent them will be deprived of all civil rights forever and banished from the kingdom of France.

However, by the time in which Gilles de Gouberville writes, twenty years later, and in the case of anyone as well known as he, this law was evidently a dead letter. For we see him again and again sending his excuses by one or another of his servitors for his non-appearances. His office as Maître des Eaux et Forêts exempted him from the military service to which other gentlemen were subject; this service being three months in the year in France or four months on foreign service, not counting the journeys involved. Nowhere does one find any complaint of this obligation; on the contrary, it probably offered a not unwelcome distraction and variety to life, gentlemen serving with gentlemen. "Le Sieur des Hachées came from camp, two servants and a cartful of baggage with him. He supped and slept here." And, of course, brought all the latest news, as did one Le Couldré, just come from camp,

who on July 17, 1559, brings word of the death of Henri II. The King died July 10, so it took seven days for the tidings to reach Cherbourg.

In January, 1562, Gilles de Gouberville journeyed to Coutances to the *monstre du ban*, to answer his call in person.

On Saturday, in the morning after breakfast, we left here, Monsieur de Saint-Naser, Cantepye, Symonnet and Minchon, to go to Coutances for the *ban* which is called for tomorrow. We passed by Valognes and spoke to the Lieutenant Bastard because this *ban* was to have been fixed at Saint-Lô. We waited an hour, then decided, Saint-Naser and I, that we would go on to Coutances. For the ferry at Pont-l'Abbé 1 sol. The water was very high. We joined Monsieur de Fermanville at Plessis. We went together to Coutances. For our repast and our horses at Pont-Joliman, 8 sols. We arrived at Coutances at sundown and lodged at the Trois Rois.

Sunday, we remained in Coutances. The roll call of nobles was held in the bishop's palace, after dinner, for the viscounty of Coutances only, by Dancel, lieutenant general of the Cotentin; the Sieur de Sacé, captain; and the Sieur de Boys-Froul, commissioner. After supper in the evening, Monsieur de Saint-Naser spoke to the lieutenant-general, asking for a *congé* to go to Cherbourg where he had to meet Monseigneur de Matignon, which they gave him.

Monday, I remained in Coutances. Monsieur de Saint-Naser left in the morning. At eight o'clock the lieutenant-general and his aids were at the bishop's palace and the roll of the gentlemen of the Viscounty of Valognes was called. And when they called the Seigneur de Gouberville and Mesnil-au-Val, according to the register, I presented myself. And I was told that as I am an officer of the King, I am liable to a fine. I at once remonstrated that the last moneys paid by the gentlemen who do not serve in person, had never been used; demanding for the other gentlemen, as well as for myself, that the receiver should account for them, which was agreed.

In the evening about five o'clock, the Advocat du Roi from Valognes arrived. We supped together. After supper we went to the house of the Procureur du Roi at Coutances, where we found a great company of gentlemen and officers at supper. We all came back together, most of us on foot.

Gentlemen who were unable to do active service, for any

reason, were liable to a fine. Gilles de Gouberville was exempt because of his manifold duties as Maître des Eaux et Forêts and yet we find repeated entries such as:

July 16, 1553 — I sent Cantepye to Le Couldre to take him the 23 livres tournoys that I owe him for my part in the service of the *ban*.

January 15, 1555 — Jacques Le Morgne, sergeant, came here to summon me to pay 22 liv. 10 sols, the sum for which I am liable for the *ban*.

Besides the royal army, there was a militia and a muster, from time to time, in towns and villages, of all who could be called on at any moment for home defense. There was a coast-guard service at Cherbourg whose loyalty was jealously watched:

January 14, 1555 — I was at the Château at Cherbourg where I told Captain Couriac that I had heard the people complaining that an Englishman, named Maître Guillaume, had been seen on the town walls, publicly, by day. The captain told me that this Maître Guillaume had left and that he had never been upon the ramparts, farther than the little house, near the door of the banqueting room, where he had been at a christening party given by Le Couldre.

In 1557, when the English tried to force a landing, Gilles de Gouberville sent "to the parishes of Teil and Saulmesnil to come with the men of Mesnil, to defend the coast."

Tuesday, June 15, 1557 — I was superintending the straining of the honey that we have taken this year, by Symonnet, Thomas Drouet, Collas and Lajoie. As we were finishing, about four o'clock, they came to tell me that the English were trying to land near Cherbourg. We left everything and went out to assemble all the men of the parish to go at once. We saw that the combat was at the Hague, to the right of the marshes. The ships were driven back by the land artillery. After sunset I came back with Cantepye, Lajoie and Symonnet, to send word to the parishes of Téil and Sausmesnil that they must come and keep watch on the coast with the men of this parish and others.

Wednesday — I sent Lajoie and Jehan Groult at daybreak to get news at Tournalville. They brought word that the English ships had

drawn off last night. When Thomas Drouet came back I had him seal up the honey.

That is how the days went. You drove off the English and went on with your affairs.

The Sire de Gouberville, as a noble, was exempt from both personal and property tax, holding himself and a certain number of his dependents, ready for the King's service on the field of battle; while the middle class, who paid both personal and property tax, were often exempt from military service.

The tax called the *quatriesme*, was paid by every holder of every class; it was imposed on "wine, cider, beer, and other beverages used in the country." The sire was also called on to pay a tithe (*dime*) on wool, and on his fruit; and a tax (*débite*) for the upkeep of the Cathedral at Cherbourg.

Special taxes were the *ayde-chevelz*, the *ayde-reliefs* and the *chapeau-de-roses*.

February 12, 1559 — Collin Grentz came to summons me to pay the *aydes-chevelz* due to the late King Henri II for the *chevalyre* of his eldest son, at present King [François II] and of his eldest daughter, at present Queen of Spain [Elizabeth who married Philippe II, after the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis].

The amount of the tax, for which Cantepye brought him a receipt, was "XI livres, 5 sols, for two *aydes-chevelz* and two *aydes-de-reliefs* for the fiefs of Mesnil and Gouberville." The *aydes-chevelz* was a tax paid by a vassal to his seigneur when his eldest son was knighted; the *ayde-de-relief* was also called *ayde-de-mariage*, payable when the suzerain married off his eldest daughter.

Finally, the *chapeau-de-roses*: "June 24, 1559 — Nicolas Le Valet went to Valognes to carry the *chapeau-de-roses* and brought back the receipt, signed by Maresc."

It is not certain what this tax was. It may have been another offering on the marriage of Princess Elizabeth. The two au-

thorities consulted differ: one says, "the *chapeau-de-roses* was a small gift made by the father and mother to their daughter on her marriage which, having accepted, she could not claim any part in their estate; this was a custom in Normandy"; the other, just as emphatically, asserts, "the *chapeau-de-roses* was an offering in money, made every year at Saint John's Day, as sign of some small dependence."

Although feudalism was declining in the sixteenth century, the country gentleman still retained many feudal rights, largely because of his moderation in the exercise of them. His administration of his functions was often paternal, rather than judicial, which is especially true of Gilles de Gouberville. He sat on the bench, much as the country gentleman continues to do in England, judging cases of poaching, dog stealing, trespass and similar offences, with justness and leniency. He called this holding the "plés," which occurs at Gouberville, but never at Mesnil. He often mentions the seigneurs of Fermanville and of Tocqueville holding the plés in their villages.

There is hardly a day in which Gilles de Gouberville was not called upon to adjust some difference between his peasants, either a matter of boundaries, service between neighbors, marriage settlements or division of property. He was their friend. He stood between them and their creditors, helped them in their lawsuits, succored the poor, visited the sick, talked with them, learned their needs, their hopes, their plans. He interested himself in the marriage of the daughters, helped to establish and find a livelihood for the sons, heard the lessons of the children, identified himself with every phase of the life about him.

His duties and responsibilities were endlessly diversified.

Sunday, VII — Messire Lienard Brillard, from Brillevast, said the mass at the parish church, then came to dinner here, with Messire Aulbin Le Vacher and Madame Hureline from Bretteville. I went to see

Thomine Margense who is ill, where I found all the women of the parish, then I went to vespers. Afterwards Messire Jacques arrived to show me the demand in marriage made by Guillaume Mesnage to Nicolas Vaultier for the person of Jeanne, sister of Nicolas. Coming back from vespers, Thomas Drouet and Guillaume Mesnage spoke to me of the marriage, begging me to make Vaultier give them an early answer.

Tuesday, IX — I went to see Nicolas Vaultier to speak to him of the marriage between Guillaume and his sister.

Wednesday, XXI — Before I was up, Gilles Berger came to tell me that Tahot had fallen from a tree and was badly hurt. I got up as fast as I could and went to Tahot's house. I found him lying before the fire. I made two poultices of tormentil which I applied to the two wounds.

Thursday, February XII, 1550 — The snow is up to the knees. After dinner I went to Pivain's house to treat Raulette, Martin's wife, who is suffering from great pain in her breast.

Monday, April XVIII, 1552 — After mass at church, Thomas Drouet came to go over his treasury accounts and while we were on these accounts, Noël Codabey arrived, who dined here.

Sunday, November V, 1553 — After dinner Julien Vallognes and Phillipin, his son, came to pay up the arrears of rent which they owed me for the past eight years. Jehan Le Saulvage from Tourlaville also came to get his pigs which he had fattening here under the oaks. He paid me two écus. I gave him back one.

Saturday, January XX — Thomas Drouet came to tell me that Yvon Mesnage had been taken with a pleurisy. I went at once to see him, then back here to dinner. Guillaume Le Clerc and his brother-in-law Pasquet came to tell me that they had decided to let Loyse, sister of Guillaume and wife of Pasquet, go to Hemevez, as nurse.

Thursday, XVII, September, 1556 — The Curé of Tourlaville, Jehan Fournel, his vicar, Maistre Guillaume Potel, and Marc Laguette dined here and then, in my presence, went over together their affairs and accounts. It was sunset when they left here.

With such a relationship between him and his people, we may imagine that his ancient rights were willingly conceded when he called upon his peasants from the church on Sundays for the *corvée*.

Gilles de Gouberville was a strict Catholic. He set a good example, never missing church unless he were ill. Sometimes it was to early matins that he hastened, when the priest blessed the water for the faithful. But usually on Sunday mornings when the bell of the church at Mesnil rang across the woods to the manor, it found the bon sire, in his best, awaiting Cayn, the church officer, who was sent to escort him to mass. If he were not going, he sent word not to await his presence to begin the service. Was it possible that they forgot their duty one morning in February? Perhaps it was cold and wet, possibly Cayn was ill; anyway, "I did not go to mass, as they did not come to fetch me, as is the custom." Did he make his displeasure felt this Saint Catherine's Day?

Between 9 and 10 o'clock I went to church. Only 3 or 4 people were there yet, as it was still early. I blame Messire Jehan Fréret, because, through ill temper, he began the mass. There was no one but Jacques Auvrey and Nicolas Quentin to help with the singing.

His duty fulfilled by his appearance at mass, the bon sire majestically retired "after the gospel," perhaps because it was followed by announcements, with which he was already familiar, from the pulpit to the people, such as that of

September 15, 1555 — After mass a proclamation was read from de Egremont, lieutenant of the viconté, calling the parishioners of this village, next Tuesday, to cart 4 loads of wood to repair the bridge and gates of Cherbourg, which wood is cut and ready at Valognes.

If he were prevented from going to mass, he was conscientious about sending his offering; "I sent my offering by Symonnet and a sol to the Brotherhood of Notre Dame and a liard for the luminar." The small boys who helped in the celebration of the mass, knew that when the proper moment came they were sure to be remembered by the seigneur; "during the offertory I gave 6 sols in liards to the little boys" and, at Russy, he gave "the little boys 7 sols in doubles and liards after vespers."

Not only money but livestock was given; offerings to be sold for the benefit of the confréries of Notre Dame and the Conception, the proceeds of which went to the adornment of chapel and altar.

Confession always preceded Holy Communion. He and all his household confessed their sins at Christmas, Easter and other religious festivals, either to a priest at the manor chapel or at one of the churches. Like many good Catholics, he sometimes went a safe distance from home to confession. "Easter Eve I went to Cherbourg, sent back the horses and stopped to sup and sleep. I supped at the Presbytery with the curé of this place. . . . After supper I went to confession to Messire Jehan Palfry, vicar, and gave him 3 sols. Easter Day. I went to hear matins and several Masses and had Holy Communion. I gave to the church works, to the confréries and to the poor, 20 sols."

We must not forget that his were the *honneurs de l'église*; *les petits honneurs*, as he was of the *petite noblesse*, but, even so, affirming his authority to his people, since he received the holy water, not by aspersion, but by the hand of the priest, had a place at the head of every procession, stood before the altar at the offertory, and received the scriptural kiss of peace.

He embodied in his person, to his peasants, the authority of the king, the church and the law.

The Sire as Maître des Eaux et Forêts

Guillaume de Gouberville, father of Gilles de Gouberville, exercised for many years the functions of Maître des Eaux et Forêts in the Cotentin. It is through papers found at Saint-Pierre-Église that we learn that he resigned his office to his son in 1543. The provisional letters patent were sent to Gilles de Gouberville in April of that year. In June he took the oath of office before the Sieur de Rauville and at once undertook his charge.

As Maître des Eaux et Forêts, Gilles de Gouberville's duties were many; it was a position of responsibility and importance. Every fortnight he sat upon the bench — held what were called *les haults jours* — to judge all questions that arose under his jurisdiction. Under him, in the forestry, were a great number of sergeants and gamekeepers, whose duty it was to protect the government forests and game and to report to him. It was he who inspected the watercourses and woods, that he might administer their resources to the best advantage. He had to determine which parts of the forest were to be felled for selling (*asseoir la vente*); to award contracts for work; to let out land for grazing after it had been cleared; to sell privately or at auction, wood standing or cut, to individuals or to the navy; and to auction the rights to the *glandée* — that is, the pasturing of pigs on the acorns in the forests, which was a most important part of the revenue. He had the care and disposal of all animals found at large and the selling by auction of the *herbage du mois du mai*, or spring grass which grew in the forest clearings. Twice a year, at Easter and Michaelmas, he had to report to the king's representative at Caen.

He was an outdoor man and he pursued every detail of the

work of his position with energy and delight. On foot or on horseback, he spent days with his subordinates following the streams and riding for miles to the different forests. It is true that there were amenities attached to the position, or perhaps they resulted from his own character; in any case he was welcome in every manor house in the country, where the work of the day was broken by food and talk.

"After dinner we went to Han and from there followed the river to Fresville. We went on up to the bridge at Neusville and then stopped with Symon de Brix, the Seigneur of Neusville."

From the pulpit, the parishioners of Tournlaville were bidden to come, one from each house, to clear the river running through the fields of Tournlaville and he was there to see the river cleaned, staying till sunset.

When he went to the forests to decide on the trees that were to be felled, he took his lieutenant, a forester and a surveyor with him. Four trees, which were called the master trees, were chosen and marked as the corners of the block to be cut. Sometimes a ditch, or a line of blazed trees marked the line between the corners. These blocks were as much as a kilometer square.

May 13, 1562 — I went to see the woods of Périers and Beauficel, to be prepared for the auction tomorrow, following the notice given by Sieur de la Fontaine. It took us four hours to ride around the wood. We refreshed ourselves in the shade, as it was very hot; then we returned by Les Forges-de-Saint-Poys where the Demoiselle de la Lande, the lady of the manor, gave us some very good wine of Anjou.

May 22, 1562 — After dinner, I went with Barnevast and Charlot to mark the corner trees in the blocks of Téil and Couldres. The trees marked, I gave my hammer to Charlot and Barnevast to go on to mark the corner trees at Barnevast and Blanqueville and to go tomorrow to mark those at Montebourg, as I do not feel at all well.

May 26, 1562 — Between 2 and 6 in the afternoon, at the court at Valognes, the King's officers, many gentlemen, lawyers, citizens of Va-

lognes and other people were assembled for the sale of the wood of this viscounty, marked and measured in the usual manner. This auction was conducted by me and the wood adjudged to the last, highest bidder.

Another day he was off early with his cousin de Tocqueville, Le Verrier, the lawyer, Cantepye, Symonnet and Minchon.

We went to Périers to measure the wood before the auction. There we met the Sieur de Gasteme, the Curé de Montjoye, brother of the Baron de Saint-Poys, and his young brother; the Demoiselle de la Lande, Lady of Saint-Poys, and others; gentlemen as well as merchants, whom I did not know. We dined at a tavern near the wood and then went to the usual place for the auction.

April 18, 1562 — I made a tour in the forest of Saint Saulveur and on my return I spoke with the Sieur des Vaulx at the château concerning the auction, after which the Sieur des Vaulx made us great cheer and affection.

The visit to the forests for the purpose of judging the value of the acorn and beech mast yield for the year took place in June. It was a very serious business, in view of the value of this harvest to the state.

Sunday, June 11, 1555, Saint Barnabas Day — At eight in the morning (after having heard mass) I went to the forest, Cantepye with me, entering by the meadow of Lespesse, where I found Sieur de la Grutuze, the Lieutenants both criminal and civil, Maistre P. Jenne, Procureur du Roy, Vastel, Procureur des Eaux et Forêts, the forester from Valognes, the Sieurs of Cyffrevast, Sottevast and Breuville, and several other officers of the same department; from there we made a circle through the forest to La Boussaye, where we found the young Curé de Cherbourg, the forester, and all the sergeants of forestry. We were all of the same opinion, that there was not enough fruit this year to award any rights of pasturage.

In most years, however, there was fruit in plenty and the rights were auctioned to the highest bidder and were often acquired by persons who afterwards sublet portions of the ground for a still larger sum. Great droves of pigs were fattened under the oaks and beeches in the king's domain, but,

that there should be no mistake, all that had a right to run there were branded.

We could prolong indefinitely our quotations from the Journal which prove the energy of its author in the execution of the daily duties of his office. It was no sinecure.

Fairly often, possibly when a little extra revenue was needed in the châteaux of Touraine, special commissioners would arrive posthaste, to sell parts of the forests, pocket the money and return as quickly as they came. At such times, the bon sire was notified to meet them and great preparations went on at Mesnil-au-Val for their entertainment. Game was provided from Valognes, claret to drink with it and white wine from Cherbourg. Once, the commissioners invited the sire to a return dinner in Valognes, where playing *flus*, after dinner and supper, he lost 62 sols.

His journeys around the country, on the business of his office, could not be called dull. In December, 1560, such interests took him to Carentan. He started with Symonnet and his friend Chandeaur and two servants; that night the three gentlemen supped with the Abbot at the Abbey of Montebourg, who gave them "good cheer." At Carentan, the next day, they had dinner at the house of the Sieur de Syboville, where they found a "jeune demoiselle," daughter of the house, worthy of note, also many other guests and again were given "good cheer"; after dinner, they went out to visit their host's horses, sheep and *aultre bestiaulx* before they rode on to sup and sleep with the Sieur de Montrenblert at Boutteville who, not to be outdone, made them "great cheer." The next morning they returned to Carentan where his case came up and lasted only an hour and a half. So at two o'clock they started back to Mesnil, but our bon sire's head was aching, after all the good cheer. When he arrived, he was indeed depressed to find that Guillemette was at Saint-Naser, so he took a little boiled milk and went to bed.

For eleven years, Gilles de Gouberville held the office of Maître des Eaux et Forêts by the provisional letters patent of April, 1543. He must have felt that he and his office were one, so interwoven were its concerns with his daily life. Suddenly in 1554, Henri II ordered all officers of the Département des Eaux et Forêts "to appear before him" for confirmation of the posts held by them from the crown, under penalty of losing office.

It was not so easy to appear before the king, when you were in the depths of Normandy, a week's journey away, and no one knew whether his Majesty was in Paris or Touraine. Gilles de Gouberville rode to Bayeux and there "after dinner at my sister's, I gave Maître François Herbeline an *écu pistolet* in order that he may appear for me, either at Paris or wherever the Court may be, in the matter of my office; I must send him a power of attorney tomorrow with copies of my commissions." The next day the paper was written, attested before a magistrate and a seal affixed.

For whatever reason, Maître François Herbeline failed in his mission. Eight months later, Gilles de Gouberville decided to undertake a journey to Blois to lay the matter in person before his majesty, in the hope of securing the coveted appointment.

Up to this time we have known our bon sire only at home, where we have followed him in his daily occupations as landowner, occupied with his tailor, careful of his health, enjoying the presence of his friends and the pleasures of the table; we have seen with what intelligence he administered his property, neglecting no source of revenue; and how full his days were between the direction of his estate and his arduous duties in the administration of Eaux et Forêts. We cannot but feel a real anxiety as we see him set forth from the countryside that knows him so well — for the unknown.

CHAPTER XV

The Journey to Blois

Monday, XX January, 1555 — At noon I left Mesnil; Symonnet and Lajoie with me. We slept at the house of the Sieur de Lestre, who entertained us well. I gave to Robert Le Maître, who acted as guide for us through the forest of Montagu, as far as Bideroe, 1 sol.

This was that Sieur de Lestre, of apple fame, of whom we have read. Could we but have heard their talk that night, we should perhaps know with what hopes Gilles de Gouberville started forth on his journey and if he was aware that a powerful rival, Nicolas Hennot, Sir d'Arreville, was setting forth for Blois on the same day.

Tuesday XXI — We breakfasted about daybreak, before leaving. I gave 5 sols to the servants. . . We then mounted our horses. Sieur de Lestre accompanied us for half a mile.

It was the custom to speed your guests on their road. We have often seen the bon sire himself, riding some distance on the way with his departing friends.

I passed by the Grand-Vay. For the ferry and food, 5 sols. Thomas Troude, son of Estienne of Valognes crossed the ferry with us. He was going to Rouen. At La Cambe for 2 measures of oats (as we had not had time to water our horses at the Vay) 11 sols. From there to Russy where we arrived about three o'clock. I supped and slept there (Total expenses of the day: XIII sols).

Wednesday XXII, Saint Vincent's Day — Early in the morning I started for Bayeux, Symonnet and Lajoie with me. I had dinner with the lieutenant, my brother-in-law, where I found Toysny also at dinner. D'Arreville passed through Bayeux and went on to sleep at Mondaye. I returned to sup and sleep at Russy. Soon after, Cantepye arrived from Mesnil.

If he realized that d'Arreville was a rival for the post of Maître des Eaux et Forêts, it is surprising that he allowed him to pass him on the road, and so to reach Blois ahead of

him. Possibly he did not know that he had any such design, but supposed that d'Arreville was going only with the intention of getting confirmation of his office of Lieutenant des Eaux et Forêts.

Thursday XXIII — In the morning we went to Bayeux, Cantepye, Symonnet and Lajoie. We breakfasted with the Lieutenant General, who gave me letters to carry to the court. I sent Symonnet to Russey to return to the Cotentin and took Cantepye and Lajoie with me to sleep at Caen. I had the horses shod at Gibert's as we passed through Bayeux, and took a letter from him to his brother-in-law Petit-Jehan at Blois. For shoeing my horses, 3 sols.

That must have been a moment of heartburning to Symonnet. To be sent back to the daily round at Mesnil, while Cantepye and Lajoie turned their horses' heads on the road of adventure, the road to the king and court, could not fail to be a bitter experience to that gay youth. When we see Gilles de Gouberville buying him a present on his way back, we feel that he would not have left his favorite without very good reasons; his position as illegitimate half brother, perhaps, being one, and possibly the need for the counsel of older and wiser heads, another. In any case we are sorry for the boy at that moment of parting, when he was inexorably "sent to Russey."

The same day we arrived at Caen and stopped at the Pot d'Etain outside the town, where I found Pierre Gohel from Le Têil who was going to Rouen, so he said. I joined the crowd, where I talked to Maître Richard Blondel. That done, I met the Prior d'Ardaine, brother of M. de Saint-Naser, in the street and we went together to a draper's to buy a half aulne of black cloth to make me a riding apron which cost XX sols and the making III sols. Then I had my horses taken to Gravelle's in the Faubourg Saint-Michel. For a shoe for my *haquenée* and for what I owed at the Pot d'Etain, III sols. I had supper at Cauvigni's with M. Le Président de Mandreville and his party; then I went to Gravelle's where I slept. For making them open the door for me, 1 sol. For supper for Cantepye and Lajoie and for my horses, XX sols (Total: XLVIII).

Friday XXIV, at daybreak we left Caen and had dinner at Falaise at the Troys-Maries. Dined with a gentleman from near Caen named Verrières and an old lawyer of Falaise. . . . For my dinner, XV sols. From there, on to sleep at Argantan at the Pot d'Etain, where it cost me XVIII sols and for a shoe for my horse, II sols (Total: XXXV sols).

The same day, d'Arreville, his servant named Nicolas, Quinéville Groult and one named Petite-Pratique, son of the wife of Maître Thomas Marye de Valognes, and the servant of this same Groult left the Grand Turc, where they had slept. One of them took (from the hostel which has the Grand Turc as sign) a new bridle belonging to a man from Caen, worth two écus. The servant of the hostelry rode a mile after them with an old bridle which they had left for the new one. But they made the servant pay V sols to get back the new bridle. This is what the servant at the Trois-Maries told us, which he had heard from the servant at the Grand Turc. I sent to the Grand Turc to find out if these things were true.

Whatever he knew of d'Arreville's intentions, it is quite evident that he did not like the man and that he was not displeased to hear this story against him, which he took pains to corroborate by one of his own people.

From Argentan, the next day, they went on, by very icy roads, to Mortagne for the night and on the twenty-sixth had dinner at Condé and slept at "Frare." Thence on the twenty-seventh through Brou to Châteaudun for dinner at the Croissant, where he met "a counselor, guard of the seal of the Parliament of Dijon" (a long way from home), and on to sleep at La Ferté-Villeneuve in the Beauce.

On the twenty-eighth (at the end of the ninth day after leaving Mesnil), they passed by "Pontiion" for dinner and arrived at their journey's end, Blois, where they put up "at the Saint Christophe in the new town." As they rode into Blois, the first person they saw was d'Arreville's servant "watering the horses." So here they are after seven days' solid riding across country over icy roads from the Cotentin, through the Bessin to Caen; then south down the valley of the Orne (with

its poplars and its cliffs) to William the Conqueror's castled town of Falaise and on to Argentan marked by its towered cathedral; then east to Mortagne, the ancient capital of La Perche, a country surely interesting to the travelers because of its great strain of horses; on, following southeast to Châteaudun where, as we have seen, they visited the château whose mediaeval donjon dominates the valley of the Loir and whose lovely Renaissance wing was but lately finished; then across the wide plains of the Beauce — dull riding — till they came in sight of the towers of Blois below them, seated on the north bank of the Loire where, had they but known it, the riders stepped into the brilliant movement of the French Renaissance.

Henri II, who preferred the Château de Chenonceaux, where he had installed Diane de Poitiers, was nevertheless in residence at the moment at the Château de Blois with his Queen, Catherine de' Medici; the Dauphin François and his young bride, Mary, Queen of Scots; the Princes Charles and Henri; and all the gay and pleasure-loving throng that formed the court.

Gilles de Gouberville did not linger long in his rooms at the inn before he started off to present the letters given him by his brother-in-law, the Lieutenant General "to Maistre Pierres Morin in his lodging at Saint-Soulaine, where I found the Lieutenant d'Escremmetot and Maistre François Herbeline."

We know from the title of "Maître" that Pierre Morin was a man of law and we may judge from the fact that Maître François Herbeline from Bayeux was there as well, that both Gilles de Gouberville and his brother official, d'Escremmetot from Beaumont-le-Roger, needed legal advice before proceeding on the business that had brought them to Blois.

But we will let him continue in his own words, with a tender

indulgence for him as we see him furbishing up his country wardrobe for his appearance at court.

Wednesday, XXIX, I remained in Blois. The King is here. We had dinner, Morin and Cantepye, in the pantry of the King's kitchen where l'Escuyer Petit-Jehan entertained us well. I supped at my lodging, where were also the Sieur de la Martinière, le Sieur de la Millionnière, the forester from Beaumont le Roger, and many others.

Thursday, penultimate, between seven and eight o'clock, I went to the château, where I attended the King's mass and then dined at the Coq. It cost me VIII sols; for a velvet bonnet IIII livres, for a silk hat, XXVII sols, and a pair of mules, XVI sols. I spent the rest of the day at the château, till five o'clock (Total: VI L XI sols).

Friday, last day [of the month], the Lieutenant d'Escremmetot and I gave a dinner to Maistre Pierre Morin, to his landlord and his wife and their people at the lodging. It cost for my share, XXVII sols and for dinner for Cantepye and Lajoie, V sols. For a scabbard of leather and one of velvet for my sword, XXXIII sols. (Total: LXV sols).

Evidently neither our bon sire nor his friend Monsieur d'Escremmetot was sparing any expense to influence events. A dinner to the lawyer who, we imagine, had the direction of their interests, was the course indicated. Usually Gilles de Gouberville dined either at the modest Coq with Lajoie and Cantepye or at the more expensive Griffon with his friends, and supped at his own lodgings with the others who were there, all gentlemen from his own Normandy, probably as little used to courts as himself.

Sunday 11d day of Candlemas, I went to mass at Saint Sauveur near the Château of Blois. The King was there, the Queen, Monsieur le Dauphin, the Queen of Scots, Mesdames, the King's daughters, and other princes and princesses.

The same day after dinner there was a tourney in the court of the château, which lasted about two hours. I was there as long as it lasted. Cantepye who was standing on a box got a nail in his foot. I left when the tourney was over, to dress it for him and bought some turpentine, 1 sol.

A tourney in the court of the Château of Blois, and that is all

that our tantalizing friend has to say about it! But Brantôme has given us his vivid descriptions of the costumes of "crimped cloth of gold," of the luxury, of the color and the movement, so that we can more readily dispense with them from the pen of our seigneur, with a certain respect for his steady head which could not be turned, by the great sights, from his interest in Cantepye's misfortune.

Monday, III, all day I remained in Blois. As soon as I was up I went to the château alone, because Cantepye had hurt his foot. I was there till ten o'clock on my business; then Cantepye and Lajoye joined me.

On Tuesday, the fourth, the king left Blois to sleep at Pontlevoy, probably at the great Benedictine Abbey there, of which Richelieu at a later date was abbot.

The following day Gilles de Gouberville promised a certain Monsieur Lefebvre the sum of 1,300 écus for the office of Maître des Eaux et Forêts for the Cotentin. This man seems to have been a public officer of some sort, perhaps a recorder, as Gilles de Gouberville consulted "the register" in his office and tipped the clerks well. He enters the offer of this large bribe without comment, as if it were quite the ordinary procedure in such a case, which it probably was.

On the sixth, after paying his landlord at the Saint Christophe, including a fee for the "washing of our shirts," he set off for Pontlevoy "where the King is," accompanied by Cantepye and Maître Herbeline "on some business," but returned to sleep at Blois the same night.

He must have gone at the advice of one of his men of law, either Pierre Morin, or Maître Herbeline, or even Monsieur Lefebvre. Did they imagine that he might more easily get the king's ear there than at Blois?

And where all this time was the Sieur d'Arreville? Not a word do we find of him and yet he must have been very busy himself, as the sequel shows.

Gilles de Gouberville had been in Blois a week before he started to draw up his petition to present to His Majesty.

Saturday VIII — I went to see M. Le Chandelier, the King's Secretary, that he might prepare my petition. In passing through the market I had my handkerchief stolen with three écus and a teston in it. I had dinner with Lieutenant d'Escremmetot, who is lodging with the King's cabinet maker. In the evening I returned to see Chandelier, to get my petition. I gave 11 écus sol and a teston to his clerk, to make a fair copy. I supped and slept at my lodging (Total: XII livres XVII sols VIII deniers).

Sunday IX — I paid my host at Saint Christophe, IV livres XI sols, and went to lodge with the King's cabinetmaker, with d'Escremmetot and Herbeline. In the evening, I went to get my petition from M. Le Chandelier; I gave the clerk who had copied it another II sols (total: IV livres IV sols).

Monday X — Remained in Blois. I dined and supped at my lodging. Maître François Herbeline was at Cherveney where M. Le Connétable is and spoke to him of me and returned in the afternoon. I corrected my petition which seemed to me too prolix.

Tuesday XI — I showed my petition to M. Le Chandelier, who approved it. I gave his clerk, to make another fresh copy, VIII sols. The King has returned to Blois. The Council is not sitting. M. Le Cardinal de Lorraine returned from Rome soon after the King arrived at Blois. We supped with our host, Jehan Moreau, in his dining room. His father-in-law and his brother-in-law, the King's butler and his wife were there (total: VIII sols).

Wednesday, XII — I gave my petition, freshly copied, to M. Le Chandelier who told me that he would give it to M. de Voysinlieu. Between one and five, I was present at a comedy played in French prose before the King and the princes and princesses in the Abbey of Saint-Gomer-de-Blés.

Thursday, XIII — Maître Pierre Morin and M. de Murat, chaplain, dined at our lodging. M. Le Chandelier told me in the court of the château, that he had given my petition to M. de Voysinlieu. In the evening, I returned to Chandelier's house, who told me that I must go tomorrow morning to the *lever* of the Sieur de Voysinlieu, to speak to him about my petition.

Friday, XIV — I spoke of my petition to M. de Voysinlieu this

morning as he went to the château. He told me that he would see about it. After dinner, I spoke to him again as he was going to the Council. He said that he had it in his belt and that if the opportunity arose, he would speak of it. After the Council, I spoke to him again and he said that he had not been able to bring the matter up and that he must follow the rules; that formerly these things were brought to the Council but that it had not been approved of, that it was not he who should bring it up and that I must speak about it to M. de Fourveaulx.

Saturday, XV — Lieutenant d'Escremmetot left for Rouen, as he had said. We counted what we had spent. My share came to CV sols. In the afternoon, I went to the château and warmed myself in the King's kitchen with Petit-Jehan, the King's equerry. He told me the story of how he put garlic on the mufflers of the ladies, of Madame. . . [the name of the lady is crossed out]. I dined and supped at my lodging. (Total: CV sols).

Sunday, XVI — All the morning I waited for La Roque at M. Donguyen's lodging. Seeing that he did not arrive, I went to find him at his lodging and returned with him to Sieur Donguyen's. I dined and supped at our lodging. In the afternoon I returned to the château, where I found La Barre, the Queen's butler. He took me to have a drink and then we walked for an hour and a half.

Monday, XVII — For slippers and linen hose for Lajoye, XVI sols. For a hatbox, XVIII sols; for civet and musk, XII sols and an *escritoire*, IV sols. I went this morning to La Roque's who was still in bed and we went together to the château. I went this evening to the King's supper. The Queen, M. le Dauphin, the Queen of Scots, and many other princes and princesses were supping together in the King's dining room. That done, I came back to supper in my lodging (Total: L sols).

Mardi-Gras, XVIII — I expected to leave Blois which I have not done. I received letters from La Roque which he had written to his father and brother in Rouen. Before dinner we found Le Mesnil Picard from Caen in the court of the château, who said he was leaving tomorrow. Maistre Pierre Gaveau, Morin's clerk, supped and slept at my lodging so that I might dress his leg which is very bad; which I did and he felt better.

The same day, I went again to see the King and Court at supper. After that I went to the ball and took Mademoiselle de Montmorency, granddaughter of the constable. At the entrance of the ballroom there

was a very great crowd. The Queen of Scots and her ladies were in this crowd. One of the ladies of the Queen gave a smack on the cheek to a young boy who poked his elbow in her side. After the ball, I supped at my lodging at eight o'clock. Ate only two eggs.

Ash Wednesday, XIX — I paid my hostess for our horses and my part of the room. I owed her XI livres XV sols which I paid; and for our expenses XXV sols, then I went to say good-by to the equerry Petit-Jehan and to mass in the chapel of the château, then came back to my lodging. (Total: XIII L).

The same day, we left Blois, Cantepye, Lajoye and I, and had dinner at La Coudraye where we were to meet Le Mesnil Picard. We had dinner together. For our dinner X sols. We went on together to sleep at Châteaudun at the Croissant. For supper XXII sols. We went, Sieur de Mesnil and I, for a walk in the town and saw the château while we waited for supper. A gentleman from Languedoc, an archer of the King's Guard, supped with us (Total: XXXII sols).

Thursday, XX — We left Châteaudun, Sieur de Mesnil, his secretary and his lackey, and dined at Bonneval at the sign of Saint Martin. For our dinner, XIII sols and sleeping at Chartres at the Chapeau Rouge, XXIII sols. Cantepye, du Mesnil's secretary and I, went to the top of the tower of the church at Chartres just before sunset. I gave a *grand blanc* as fee to the custodian. (Total: XXXVII sols).

Friday XXI — We left Chartres and had dinner at Dreux. While they prepared dinner I went to see a mill at the entrance to the town whose spindles were of iron. For our dinner, XV sols, and slept at Evreux where we saw a young merchant from Rouen named Le Pelletier. For our supper, XXIV sols and we were not well treated. (Total: XXXIX sols).

Saturday XXII — We left Evreux all together and had dinner at Lalovier at the Corne-de-Cerf. Soon after, Monsieur le Procureur General du Roy of the Parliament at Rouen arrived. Le Mesnil and I dined with him. For the dinner, XV sols. We slept at Rouen at the Tableau. I took the letters to La Roque that his brother had sent from Blois, and another to his father, then returned to my lodging (Total: XV sols).

Sunday XXIII — Remained in Rouen. For our dinner at Tassin's, XI sols. I supped at my lodging. Young de Franqueville was there and a young Portugese named Emanuel (who had been under arrest because of some treasonable letters that had been found on him). Also one

named Crescauville from Caen and others, as many from Caen as elsewhere (Total: XIX sols).

Monday, XXIX — I remained in Rouen. We breakfasted in our room, the Sieur de Mesnil and ourselves, and then went to the baths where we were till midday. It cost me XIII sols, then we had a dinner at Tassin's which cost me, III sols. I supped at my lodging with the company (Total: XVI sols).

Tuesday, XXV, St. Matthews Day — Remained in Rouen. We had dinner at the Tour Carrée, Le Mesnil Picard, the Sieur de Vaumartin, the Sieur de Bellefontaine, de Crux and several others. It cost me, VI sols.

Wednesday, XXVI — Remained in Rouen. We dined at Tassin's. The Sieur de Franqueville paid. He had gained last night at play. For three aulnes of cloth, IV livres. For three woolen caps, X livres V sols. For a little chest, XXXIII sols. For two pounds of Damascus raisins, XIV sols. For a sword for Symonnet, XXXIV sols, and for a dozen steel buttons for him, 11 sols VI deniers. I supped at my lodging with the company. For shoeing my horses and for mending Lajoye's shoes, XII sols (Total: IX livres XI sols VI deniers).

The same day in the evening, the Sieur de Franqueville and the woman of our lodging had a great quarrel and fight; the husband joined in, and the son-in-law, Saint-Roc de Caen. The lady got a sword thrust in the leg.

Thursday, XXVII — In the morning, I settled with my host. I owed him VII livres X sols which I paid and to Monville, LXXI sols which I owed him from the year 1550 which I paid last night (Total: XI livres 1 sol).

The same day we left Rouen, the Sieur de Bellefontaine, his lackey, Cantepye, Lajoye and I, had dinner at Boucacharf. It cost us each XI sols and on to sleep at Ponteaude-Mer at the Dauphin, where I was very ill and ate no supper. XXVIII sols.

Friday, XXVIII — We left Ponteaude-Mer. Bellefontaine went on to his uncle's at Couquinvilliers and we went to dinner at the Peruque at Honnefé. For dinner XVI sols. The Sieur de Mesnil who slept last night at the Auge at Ponteaude-Mer joined us at the Trois Marchants at Honnefé. We went on to sleep at Dives. For supper and crossing the Tocque, XVIII sols. I paid for Quentin, de Baleroy's servant, VIII sols (Total: XXV sols).

Saturday, XXIX, last day — We left Dives. For the ferry, 11 sols. We had dinner at Caen, at M. Frisque's where de Mesnil made me stop. Cantepye and Lajoye went to dinner at de Mesnil's. For our horses and Quentin's, V sols. I slept at Bayeux. VII sols.

Sunday, first day of March. Remained in Bayeux. I dined and supped with the lieutenant. For shoes for my horses and medicine for my hackney and salve in a box, X sols.

So here he is on his way back to Mesnil without a word in his Journal as to the success or failure of the expedition. Moreover it is not until some months later, by a reference to the Sieur d'Arreville as Maître des Eaux et Forêts, that we know that he was the fortunate aspirant, either by reason of greater influence or a larger bribe. We have no hint in the Journal whether Gilles de Gouberville was already smarting under his defeat on the ride back, or if he did not learn of his failure until later.

The party chose a different route for their return journey from Châteaudun, spending four days in such jovial company at Rouen that we are inclined to think that he was returning full of hope from his mission.

Tuesday, III — I dined with the lieutenant. After that I called on Madame Mesnil who gave me change for two écus. For a bottle, to carry some wine to my uncle, XV sols. I gave the servants at the lieutenant's, V sols, then left for Russy. It was about 4 o'clock. I gave the little boy, son of Grand-Camp, who brought me the abstract that I had had made at the scrivener's, of the sale which my late brother, Guillaume, had made to my uncle, 1 sol. (Total: XXI sols).

Wednesday IV — Remained at Russy. In the morning, I went to find my uncle who was having fagots made near the church and we came back by the new ditch he is making, by Bourgvie and so to dinner.

Thursday, V — At daybreak, we left Russy, Cantepye and Lajoye with me, and passed by the Grand-Vay. For food and ferry VIII sols. Léon Brohier was there and ferried us over. VIII sols.

The same day, Lajoye stayed at Vay to return tomorrow to Russy to take back the horse that Harel had loaned me to carry our little

trunks, which could not come on to Mesnil. I gave him X sols. I came back by the dunes and slept at home. It was still an hour before sundown when we got here. X sols.

The journey, including the time in Blois, lasted 43 days and it cost him 108 livres, 8 sols and 4 deniers, or about 2 livres, 10 sols per day; in which sum were included his own expenses and those of Lajoye and Cantepye, the keep of three horses and the prices of the various objects which he bought. Comparing these prices with those paid by him in 1554 on a journey which he took in the Bessin and Avranchin with Symonnet, Cantepye and Lajoye, we find the general rates of the inns about the same in all these provinces at that time.

As for their mounts, we see them doing their thirty English miles a day, carrying their riders and baggage, on roads covered with ice and snow; a pretty good performance for those hardy horses of his, reared at liberty in his forest lands.

It would be a very interesting journey to make today on the track of our bon sire, comparing prices and looking for the old hostels. But if we tried to follow the spelling of the Journal, we should have some difficulty in finding our way. "Frare," where he slept one night, is certainly Frazé; "Fertéville-Neufve" is La Ferté-Villeneuve. "La Coudraye" is probably Les Coudreaux. "La Loviers" is, of course, Louviers and "Boucacharf" is Boug-Achard, as "Ponteau-de-Mer" is Pont-Audemer, and "Honneflé" is Honfleur. The abbey where he went to see a *comédie* acted in French prose before the King, which he calls "Saint Gomer-de-blés," must surely have been the Abbey of Saint Laumer. The fête of its patron saint fell upon January 14, and it was very probably in celebration of this day that the entertainment was given by the Benedictines; a morality or a mystery play on the life of their patron saint, which Gilles de Gouberville called a "comedy."

We are glad to see the bon sire at home now, in the

midst of his own, no longer reduced to the necessity of the courtier, conciliating the staff of the palace, drinking with the Queen's butler and dining with the steward. We feel that the pickpocket who snatched his handkerchief saw him for what he was, an honest country gentleman and easy prey. So too, that wretched Sieur de Voysinlieu who, through carelessness or ill will, carried the Sire's petition in his belt and failed to present it to the king.

In spite of all the wonders he had seen, balls and plays and dinners in palaces, kings and queens and princes, how happy he must have been as he rode over the dunes, with Symonnet's presents in his saddlebags, knowing that he soon should see the round tower of Mesnil-au-Val.

The Church and the Practice of Medicine

In the sixteenth-century village, the church was the center not only of the religious life, but of all the life of the community. Here, after mass or vespers, the bon sire met his villagers and often settled their disputes; here rents were collected; notices of sales were read; demands for bids on public work were made; notice was given of expiration of leases; assessors and collectors of taxes were elected. At the church door, sides were chosen for the village team of *choule*; here the game of *paume* was played against the church wall; and in the churchyard the vicar and the seigneur joined in the game of bowls or skittles. The priests, more ambitious, might drill the villagers in the production of a miracle play, a morality or a nativity. The church entered into every phase of the life of the village, as its bell rang the marriage peal or tolled for the dead.

Gilles de Gouberville was in constant relationship with the clergy. There is hardly a day that the name of one or another priest does not appear on his pages. You may recognize them, if in no other way, by the qualifying title of "Messire." The Curé de Tourlaville, the Curé de Cherbourg and, his uncle, the Curé de Gouberville, were among his greatest friends, though the two latter gentlemen had only a mercenary interest in their cures.

The living of Mesnil-au-Val was the gift of the Abbey of Cherbourg, a patronage of very ancient date, mentioned in the *livre noir* of the Bishopric of Coutances. Monsieur Roc de Montpellier, to whom the abbot had given the living in 1549, did not enter his church from the day of his ordination until 1562, when he was supplanted. In all the years of Monsieur de Montpellier's curacy, the souls of the village were in the

care of vicars, whose first duty was to look after the material interests of their curé, collecting tithes and rents and making all they could from the glebe, in order to produce as large a revenue as possible.

Gilles de Gouberville's uncle received the revenues from the three parishes of Gouberville, Russy and Menesqueville, near Evreux. He appeared in the chancel at Gouberville every year at Easter and on the occasion of any *jubilé*. The rest of the year the spiritual welfare of the parish was in the hands first, of Messire Jasper Troude and, later, of Messire Jehan Michel, who often accounted to Gilles de Gouberville for monies, which were his share of the revenue of the living.

It was not only the curés of country churches who took their duties thus lightly. Étienne Martel de Basqueville, named Bishop of Coutances in 1552, died in 1560 having spent but a few months of those eight years in his diocese.

Besides the curés who lived on the parish revenues and the vicars who did their work, there were a great number of free priests (*habitués*) whose position was precarious. They may sometimes have taken time to say a mass, but they were usually occupied in eking out a living by any kind of labor. Messire Jacques Auvrey, who sometimes officiated at the manor chapel, came every year to the manor to prepare the fleeces for the Paris merchant, or to aid in the running of wax or the sowing of wheat. There was little to which these priests did not turn their hands. At Gouberville, Messire Jacques Ermyce worked as carpenter, making doors and window frames; others acted as servants and messengers or worked in the garden or harvest field.

In short, the state of the clergy was deplorable; the curés depended upon the favor of their patrons; the living of the vicars depended on making the parishes pay; the free priests depended on the work of their hands.

The presbyteries necessarily reflected the indifference of

those who handled the parish revenues. As Monsieur Roc de Montpellier did not once in ten years visit Mesnil-au-Val, it is not surprising that the vicarage was almost in ruins and that "Jehan Fréret came to tell me that one wall of his room has fallen at the presbytery."

Messire Jehan Fréret was the vicar of Mesnil-au-Val, with its 60 houses and 376 souls. Whatever his weekly avocations, on Sunday mornings, he fulfilled his religious duties to the letter. First he said matins, then a mass to Our Lady, after which came the parish mass and that again was often followed by a mass sung for the dead, or for some other special intention. When vespers came, however, at 2 o'clock, Messire Fréret was not to be depended upon; he might be tipsily quarrelsome, or drunk.

Even so, he had not the right, like the Curé of Rauville, to say mass "booted and spurred, with pistol and hawk on the altar."

It is not surprising to find on many a page of his Journal, proofs of Gilles de Gouberville's knowledge of medicine and the faith reposed in his skill by the parish. The country gentleman of his day had a passion for acquiring knowledge and knew how to put his studies to practical use. Living in such remote places, it was necessary to know a little of everything, if you were not to become a victim of your isolation. The more intelligent the man, the more would he desire to control circumstances and be capable of fulfilling the needs of his household and dependents.

In his treatment of illness and accident, we find a tone of confidence, as of one whose methods have met with success. In any serious case, however, he did not trust himself, but sent for barber, surgeon, or physician, for the professions were distinct. His personal medical adviser was Raoul Dager, the Vicar of Valognes. His usual barber and bloodletter was Richard Le Gros at Montebourg. The great bonesetter of

the country was the Vicar of Saint-Vaast, who was sent for from all sides to set a broken limb or pull a dislocated knee or shoulder into place.

But, in the first instance, it was always the seigneur who was called upon, and at all hours, to treat all manner of maladies, for which he had his pet nostrums. The colds from which they all suffered were severe and frequent and, for these, he hastened to prescribe bed and a *chaudel*, a hot drink which might be compounded in divers ways: of hyssop and rosemary and old wine; of licorice, ginger and wine; of hot milk and garlic; or of cinnamon, sugar and red wine. He took his own prescription — "At ten o'clock I took a *chaudeau* for my cold, present the Sieur des Hachées, then I went to bed to sweat. Cantepye, Symonnet and Lajoie watched by me till midnight to keep me from going to sleep." But his own greatest sufferings were from what he calls a *colique-passion*, for which he took various nefarious-sounding concoctions, doubtless most efficacious: such were his *eau de hagues* and *eau de cresson*, his pills (*bols* to use his nice round word) of *cassis*, and his *pilules sine quibus* (whatever that dog Latin may mean).

He prepared another medicine, composed of rosine, ginger and mercury and a draught made of iron, rosine and ginger. He used tormentil for wounds; he applied cabbage leaves to draw out inflammation, and stinging nettles for a contusion, and goose grease for a pleurisy. But the most high sounding of his medicaments was a salve, which he calls *unguentum aureum*, or *unguentum apostolorum*, which took its name both from its golden color and from its twelve ingredients.

In the winter, he often mentions that the sick are lying in front of the fire, surely the only comfortable spot for them, in those great stone-floored rooms.

Once, when he had a *véhémentissime* pain in his tooth, he called Thomas Drouet to cauterize it.

Oddly enough, smallpox and the plague are each only once mentioned; the latter when his niece de Cresnays asked him to give her one or two rooms at Gouberville, "as the daughter of our near neighbor and a servant have died and they fear it may be the plague."

The question of diet for his sick occupied him greatly. With his usual kindness and generosity, he sent lavish presents of calf's-foot jelly, chicken broth, chickens, pigeons, kids, honey and white bread to his convalescents; to family or servants alike.

He had great faith in beer and cider, both of which he administered in large quantities, sending to the Abbey of Cherbourg or the Abbey of Esquerdreville for the beer and giving his best cider *de marque* for this purpose. For one of his patients he made a *soupe de légumes*, still the first order of any French doctor, in cases of stomach trouble.

His care for his dependents is beyond praise. On January 31, 1554, returning from a journey,

about three hours after midnight, I found Martin Birette who had hurt his foot badly with a millstone, by his own folly, so he said. After sleeping about two hours with my clothes on, I went to dress his foot. That done I went alone to Valognes, without eating or drinking, to fetch Guillaume Collas, the barber, to see Birette's foot. His foot was all *estirméne* and he had a high fever.

He called two more surgeons, but no one seems to have suggested amputation and the poor man died in two days, undoubtedly from blood poisoning.

In Rouen, our bon sire had another physician, Maître Jehan Le Prévost, to whom he went for special cures. The first time he writes of this is Thursday, June 12, 1550, when he left Mesnil-au-Val accompanied by his brother Guillaume, the student, the faithful Cantepye and Symonnet. They arrived on

the seventeenth at Rouen and went to the Hotel du Tableau, where he found himself in very good company; among others, there were several deputies from Caen to the *états de Normandie*, with whom he dined.

The next day, as he was not feeling well, he consulted a practitioner named Bettencourt, who gave him a prescription and a syrup to take before meals. The next few days he kept his room, regularly noting the doses of his syrup, and when he was better, he moved from the Tableau to the house of Maître Jehan le Prévost, in order to commence a diet for a pain in his ear from which he had suffered for the last fifteen years. There he remained, observing a rigorous régime which must have been a change from the good cheer of his own table. The rest of June and part of July passed in this manner, till, on the eighteenth, he took a holiday, going to a *collation* at the house of Madame de Sahen, where he hardly infringed on his régime, eating, as he notes, only pears, cherries and jam.

However, we need not imagine that our bon sire led a dull life at the doctor's; other boarders in the house were people of consequence who had come from long distances, ladies as well as gentlemen, Captain Cadiot, Monsieur and Madame Papillon and others. He passed at least one whole night playing at *rouelle* with de Sideville, which kept him in bed till noon the next day.

While he was there, the servant Guillaume "ran away because he was afraid of a beating, as he had eaten the whole of a fat chicken sent as a present to Le Prévost." One day the party was augmented by "Pierre Lachère, a burgher of Rouen, who has come to follow a régime because he is too fat for his age, which is only XXVII."

As Christmas approached, he bought presents; a black silk belt and a pair of Morocco gloves for his sister in Bayeux, and a *pomme de senteur* and a little velvet cap for

his uncle. On Christmas Eve he fulfilled his Christian duty, going to Midnight Mass at the Priory of Saint-Lô and returning to a *réveillon* of sheep's feet and a jug of wine. Soon after, he turned his face homeward, but whether his hearing was better or not, we are never told.

And now, to cure the bite of a dog:

November 5, 1556—Early in the morning I went to see Jehan Parys. In front of his hedge, his dog bit me in the leg, tore my hose and made three holes in my leg.

November 6—I sent for my cousin de Bretteville to come and look at my leg. . . . He came and will be back tomorrow. . . .

November 7—My cousin de Bretteville arrived and dressed my leg. And, as we do not know whether the dog was mad, he incised all the places which the dog had touched, which gave me great pain, and he applied such herbs as it is the custom to use for those who are bitten by mad dogs. There were present, the Curé de Tourlaville, Guillaume Gallé [Madame de Saint Pol's servant], and most of my servitors.

On November seventeenth, still suffering from his leg, he went on a discreet little pilgrimage to the chapel at Bretteville, with the Curé de Tourlaville, Cantepye, Symonnet and Lajoye.

The curé said mass before the image of Saint Hubert [that good patron of hunters, who knew the way of dogs]; this done we had dinner with my cousin the Sieur de Bretteville, who unbound my leg. Then we came home.

CHAPTER XVII

Justice

There is not a moment, during the thirteen years of the Journal, in which Gilles de Gouberville is not engaged in a lawsuit. A lawsuit? As many as three at a time. The country bristled with his men of law, at Rouen, Caen, Bayeux, Valognes and Cherbourg.

There was one lawsuit between himself and his neighbor Basan, Sieur de Gatteville, over a small matter of 30 sols' rent, which went on for years, endlessly appealed, during the course of which the roads were kept warm with the running feet of their emissaries carrying offerings of fat capons, kid, sugar, game and venison pasties to soften the hearts of the judges at Valognes and Saint-Lô. In one year, 1549 to 1550, he journeyed four times from Mesnil to Rouen on this business.

When he arrived at Rouen, he found that Gatteville had been awarded some costs against him.

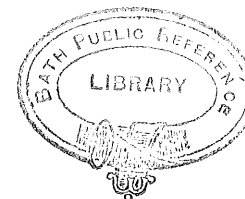
Monday, July XXVIII—I promised to give the Sieur de Gatteville on Wednesday the money that has been awarded him.

Wednesday—Basan summonsed me to pay him the money I owe him. I replied that I would pay in two days.

Thursday—I changed some gold at Papillon's to give to Gatteville. Papillon lent me XXII livres, XIII sols tournoys.

Friday, First day of August—Before dinner I gave the Sieur de Gatteville, in the money changer's shop, on the steps of the palace [Palais de Justice], the sum adjudged against me, all in coin stamped with a cross: present, Sieur d'Auville, Bartole de Moncel, Saint Michel, Basan and others.

Sunday, III day—I had Symonnet bled for a pain in the head and stomach and . . . sent him to Le Prévost for a cure of twenty days. The same day, as I was going to bed, Martin came to tell me that the Sieur de Gatteville is very ill and unable to speak.



Monday IIII — As soon as I was up, I went with Messire Richard Hochet to see Gatteville, whom we found very ill.

Tuesday, V — I returned to Basan's lodging. He had died two hours after midnight. It was decided that an autopsy should be held at four o'clock, which was done and I was there, Le Tourp, Jacques Cléret, Mademoiselle de la Motte and several others. The same day, after he had been opened and the doctors and surgeons had inspected his organs, they stated that the death of this gentleman was from natural causes and that he was not the victim of foul play by poison or otherwise. That done, he was buried in the church of Saint Michel, and the Sieur de Haye-Hue and I held the front corners of the pall and the Sieur Du Tot and le Tourp the back ones; after the interment I took a walk on the quay.

Wednesday, VI — I went to the mass for Basan where I remained for the whole service.

After years of constant litigation with de Gatteville, Gilles de Gouberville put aside all thought of enmity and remembered only that they were old acquaintances and neighbors since boyhood. He was present at the autopsy and held a corner of the pall as the funeral procession moved through the streets to the church.

After such a generous gesture, one might expect him to come to some understanding with Basan's son. Not at all. The lawsuit proceeded with fresh vigor. Once more Lajoye hastened to Valognes to present a kid to M. le Lieutenant Bastard and a pasty to Sire Jehan Poictevin. And Cantepye hurried to Saint-Lô bearing only seven rabbits, two partridges, one hare, one leveret and two mackerel, to soften the hearts of the judges.

These gifts to the court were an established usage and were known as *épices*. The custom was so abused that, in 1552, Henri II passed an act against it: "In order that justice may be purely and straightly administered, we desire that the judges should content themselves with the public salary and wages, without accepting *épices* or any other gifts, on pain of

punishment." But in another place we read that "it is not to be presumed that the king would forbid his judges receiving some venison or other bagatelles, whether their salary is sufficient or not."

Barely four months after de Gatteville's death, the lawsuit, combined with other affairs, took Gilles de Gouberville back to Rouen. As usual, he passed by Montebourg, Bayeux, Caen, Dives, Honfleur, and Pont Audemer, arrived at Rouen five days after leaving Mesnil-au-Val, and put up at the Aigle d'Argent. His first care was for his appearance. He bought velvet shoes, a velvet belt and fur and damask for a new robe. He patronized the jeweler and the armorer, buying a new dagger and sword hilt and having a ruby recut and a memorial ring made. He supped with the merry company at Dr. Prévost's, entertained at his lodgings and dined one day with Julian Basan, the new Sieur de Gatteville, and the lawyers, in a fruitless endeavor to come to an understanding.

Finally, however, he writes, April 30, 1556: "This morning my case was decided against the Sieur de Gatteville." He hastened to share his satisfaction with the judges and counsel, to whom he gave a prodigious dinner, at which they drank *neuf gallons de vin* (thirty quarts) to celebrate the great day.

Many of his lawsuits were in connection with the rights in wood and stream of the administration of *Eaux et Forêts*. We see him riding to Caen, accompanied by Pinchon carrying "a dozen glass flagons"; as soon as they arrived, "I went to the house of M. le Trésorier Novince, presented the flagons and spoke to him of the business that brought me, namely, the sale of wood in the forest of Brix."

The Sire de Gouberville took the law into his own hands on occasion. "April 21, 1553 — I pulled up four pear trees that Ozeville had planted in a right of way between his court and the church." Next day, he regularizes the act: "Early

this morning I sent Cantepye and Chandeleur to Tocqueville to make a *haro* against the Sieur d'Ozeville because of the pear trees I had pulled up yesterday."

That was done in broad daylight, but the following high-handed procedure had the cloak of darkness. "June 3, 1555 — I went to the fields of Tournalville to see a cloth mill that has been started on the river Trottebec."

June 4, 1555 — I sent for Sanson Mouchel of Sauslemesnil to come and talk to me. . . . After supper, we went, Symonnet, Lajoie, Pierrot Dudoyt, Giret Maillard, Hubert Chandeleur, to Tournalville to smash the dam they have made in the old bed of the stream to raise the water for the cloth mill which Ferraut Postel of Cherbourg is making. . . . It was midnight when we got back here.

Two weeks later, he writes, "I went to Cherbourg to come to some understanding with Postel concerning the mill that he had begun on the river." Nearly a dozen of the neighbors were present at the meeting, which was held at Robine de la Mer's tavern, not in court.

He followed a similar procedure in the destruction of a ditch that had been dug to inclose some common land, and in the closing of a road.

Besides constant brawls, many robberies, acts of brigandage and assaults are noted. "I met one of de Creulet's sons from Bayeux, in pursuit of a servant who had stolen his father's silver plate." "Thomas Girard came to tell me that in his absence, his house had been entered and everything taken." Thomas Drouet caught a lad with 114 sols that he had stolen from the sire; and Quentin makes a "*haro*" against Nicolas Leveque, who has had the audacity to plow his fields against his will.

These were harmless pastimes, however, beside the troubles in which his own friends and household were often embroiled. Daggers, swords and staves were the weapons of the moment.

Cantepye cut a man over the head with his sword; a servant struck a soldier and "cut away a piece of his head, skin, flesh and a piece of bone"; Noël and Lajoie fought their adversaries over a game of bowls, from which Noël returned with a wound on the head. His brother François, with three other men, held up a traveler near Bayeux, took his papers and told him that they would cut his throat if he came that way again; there is de Raffoville assaulted in church; his neighbor de Sideville killing Madame de Saint-Pol's lawyer; Cantepye's brother killing the tavern keeper at Pieulx; and the three Parmentiers, of whom the eldest was Curé of Cosqueville, murdering his old friend Chandeleur.

What could be expected from the rabble, or from the men, when the ladies of the highest aristocracy gave them such an example as this?

December 28, 1558 — I left here early, Cantepye with me, for Bricquebec where we arrived before nine o'clock. I found Madame [the Duchess] in the gallery with some of her ladies. She was laughing at her pages and maids of honor who had fought the night before on the Feast of the Innocents, so she said. Mademoiselle Gouffy had been wounded in the breast, La Porte in the leg, and Frion the lackey had a blow on the head, so Madame said.

As we have seen, it was de Creulet's son who was on the track of the servant who had stolen his father's silver, and on March 15, 1550, the sire notes: "Chandeleur is getting ready to leave tomorrow early for the Bessin to apprehend those who have killed his nephew." Where, then, did the law come in? In no instance does Gilles de Gouberville mention its intervention. The abbé, after studying the many cases in the Journal, concludes that there was no appeal to law for the greater number of offenses, but that they were still accommodated by tariff, like that to be read in the *Coûtume de Normandie*, in the chapter entitled, "In the case of simple,

personal quarrel. . . . A slap with the palm, 5 sols; a blow of the fist, 12 deniers; knocking down, 18 sols; a wound that bleeds, 36 sols."

We read of Gilles de Gouberville acting as intermediary among his villagers and assessing the damages in a money fine.

October 9, 1562 — Jehan Pinel, Martin Drouet and Vincent Varin came here about the trouble between Martin's son and Roger Mouchel, who have been fighting. I spoke to them at the fair of Saint Denis and arranged that tomorrow the witnesses should come here and that I should examine them. [The next day] They all came; I settled [*j'appointe*] the matter between the said Roger and Drouet. It was Drouet who was attacked. It was agreed that Roger should pay Drouet 15 livres. Then I gave them breakfast.

Cases of seduction were also settled in this manner.

July 11, 1562 — Jehan Deslandes of Tollevast came on a matter between Deslandes and Messire Jehan Auvrey [one of the priests at Mesnil], as Deslandes' sister is expecting a child by Messire Jehan Auvrey. . . . He came to speak to me and then we went together to see Deslandes and I settled between them that Auvrey should pay Deslandes 12 sols.

When it came to cases of murder, the same procedure or *appointement* was followed. The murderer could come to an agreement with the family of the murdered man by paying a sum of money and win his immunity from punishment and his rehabilitation in the community. Only in case no such *appointement* could be made, was the law called in to punish the offender. There seems to have been no local body of any kind to which to appeal; nothing nearer than the king's lieutenant at Valognes or the Parliament at Rouen.

The name of Chandeaur has often appeared in the Journal. He was a *bailiff* under the civil court at Valognes and a neighbor and friend of Gilles de Gouberville.

August 20, 1558 — . . . Chandeaur was murdered last Thursday, near the Manor of Bellanville, at Cosqueville, belonging to Roullant Le

Parmentier, a bourgeois of Cherbourg; and the rumor is this Le Parmentier and his eldest son, Curé of Cosqueville, killed Chandeaur because he was serving papers on the curé, for his appearance [before a tribunal] at the request of Robert de Hanot, Squire, Sieur de Cosqueville.

August 22, 1558 — . . . As I was with my mowers, Chandeaur's wife passed, coming here. She told me of the sorrow and trouble she had had over the body of her husband; she had spent the night beside him where he fell, because the neighbors did not dare help her through fear of Le Parmentier and his son.

The next day Gilles de Gouberville went over to Bretteville to talk to the sieur and the curé of the affairs of the widow and her children.

There is not a word more of the case, till over a year later.

September 22, 1559 — . . . the wife of the late Chandeaur has been to Valognes for the *appointement* to be made between the Sire de Cosqueville and the Parmentiers for the outrages against the Sieur de Cosqueville and the *homicide*[!] on the person of Guillaume Chandeaur.

November 23, 1559 — . . . Chandeaur's wife and her son Claude passed here going to Montebourg, as the Sieur de Cosqueville and Le Parmentier are to *appointer* the outrages on the said de Cosqueville and the *homicide* of Guil. Chandeaur by Roullard Le Parmentier and his sons.

All efforts at *appointement* having failed, the Sieur de Cosqueville evidently took the case to the Parliament at Rouen.

April 29, 1560 — We had dinner at Barfleur with M. de Bordeaux, counselor from Rouen, and M. Bigot, king's advocate from the court of the Parliament at Rouen, who are there on the commission of Robert de Hanot, Squire, Sieur de Cosqueville, against Roullard Le Parmentier and Jehan and Thomas Le Parmentier, his sons, all *bourgeois* of Cherbourg, to get information regarding the excesses and outrages committed by the said Le Parmentier against the said de Cosqueville in the sacking of his house. We supped at the Convent of the Augustins with these gentlemen, the commissioners.

November 8, 1560 — While I was in Bayeux, the Sieur de Cos-

queville and Cantepye arrived from Bayeux and told me that Thomas Le Parmentier, called Captain Touppin, of Cherbourg, had been beheaded in Rouen for the sack made by him and his brother Jehan, of de Cosqueville's house and for other larcenies, pillages and thefts made by the said Le Parmentier; and that his brother is condemned to the same punishment and their father to do penance at Valognes barefooted and uncovered, because he abetted his sons in these crimes and because his son Jehan had killed Guil. Chandeleur, sergeant; that he must pay heavy fines to the king and . . . to Cosqueville and the widow and children of the said Chandeleur.

To sum up: three individuals sack and pillage a house and kill the officer who serves papers on them. For fifteen months, we see no trace of any intervention of local law; but at this late date, a commission arrives from the Parliament at Rouen to inquire into the facts; up to this time the murderers have been at large and during this time they have made several efforts to *appointer* the crimes with the families of their victims. It is only when these tentatives have failed that the case is taken to the court at Rouen by de Cosqueville.

Another interesting case is that of Guillaume de Gruchy of Urville, who in a moment of anger (*par chaleur et hâtivety*) stabbed his brother-in-law in the presbytery of their village and fled. The family and friends of the murderer and the murdered decided that it would be to the best interests of the children of the murdered man if the murderer were to return.

. . . in the cause of peace and love, and that the said de Gruchy may remain respected and because of the good it is hoped he will do in future to his sister and the children of the defunct, Messire Guillaume Burnouf, priest, Curé of Urville, tutor by decree to the children and by the advice of many friends and relatives, desires, consents and accords in the name of these children that the said de Gruchy be purged of this case and that he may live in peace, without prosecution, or any trouble or reproach. [This was to be done on condition that] Guillaume de Grouchie should pay for a solemn Mass to be said in the church of Urville every year on the anniversary of the murder, at the cost of five

sols tournoys which should be distributed: 20 deniers to the priest, 20 deniers for remembrance — tolling bell, candles and offering — 20 deniers for the assistants at the mass; and that Guillaume de Grouchie should pay each year 20 sols to the children or their heirs, or twenty *vergées* of land in the town of Urville.

Three of the murderer's friends went bond for this agreement which was signed and sealed in a public act; we may suppose that he returned to live thereafter "without trouble or reproach."

This case proves that the law, while aware of the crime and the ransom, took no measures unless, all *appointement* between the parties having failed, it was finally resorted to for punishment. Here, in the Cotentin in the sixteenth century, we have a procedure which was but the continuation of a custom inherited from a long past.

It may have been because of the terrible punishments inflicted, that so few of the cases reached the courts. Hanging, quartering, burning, the torture, the wheel, as well as flogging and life imprisonment, were used. In 1549, the bon sire writes,

Today sentence was passed at the bailiwick before the Lieutenant Bastard on Michault Pasquier and Michel his son and Marin Carpentier, son-in-law of the said Michault, all inhabitants of Brix; the said Carpentier was condemned to be broken on the wheel and to preliminary torture, the said Michel to be tortured, for the murder of Marion Pasquier by Carpentier. This matter occupied the whole afternoon until six o'clock. I was present at the judgment and supported it.

It is not unusual to find a number of unfortunates executed at the same time, in the presence of a crowd, among whom was the Sire de Gouberville and his friends.

For one offense only, that of poaching, there seems to have been no hope of any *appointement*. All the parliaments of Europe agreed in imposing the most severe penalties on poaching in the state forests. It is true that the first offense was punished by a month on bread and water, but hardened offenders found no reprieve. And it is sickening to read of

"2 young boys of Montebourg decapitated and three hung, behind the Château of Valognes," for this crime.

There is only one case of imprisonment (usually the punishment for political offenders) mentioned, and as it has a happier ending, I will record it here.

February 24, 1553 — I went to Cherbourg, Cantepye and Lajoie with me. Boysinart, the provost, was at Cherbourg, arrived yesterday with his archers escorting an Italian gentleman who was condemned to be imprisoned [*anmuré* — walled-up] for his misdeeds.

February 28 — Thomas Drouet supped and slept here, in order to go early tomorrow morning to Cherbourg to see immured the gentleman whom Boysinart had brought.

March 1 — At daybreak Symonnet and Thomas Drouet went to Cherbourg and saw the chevalier in his cell, according to his sentence, and saw them burn his papers before him; present, Boysinart, the Captain of Cherbourg, Saint-Naser and several others.

Evidently in the Cotentin, imprisonment in a cell was a sufficient novelty to draw Symonnet from Mesnil-au-Val at daybreak. It was probably more terrible to their imaginations than violent or sudden death. But we are not obliged to leave the Italian chevalier in his cell, as the following paper has been found in the local archives:

Henri [II] by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, to our dear and well-beloved Jacques de Meudrac, lieutenant at the Château of Cherbourg. As we formerly sent to the Château of Cherbourg, the Chevalier Thomas Decardi, to be there confined, immured for the rest of his life under your guard and charge; and since our very dear and well-beloved cousin, the Duke of Mantua, has requested and prayed us through his ambassador, the Sieur Hercules Strossi, to gratify him by delivering to him this chevalier: which we have accorded to him: We, because of this, command and expressly enjoin you, at once after the presentation of this present, to take the Chevalier Thomas from the place where he is immured and deliver him into the hands of the said Strossi, ambassador of our cousin the Duke of Mantua, to send him to our cousin, his master. . . . Given at Compiégne, the XVIII day of

May, in the year of grace, one thousand five hundred and fifty-four and the eighth of our reign.

HENRI

From the walls and gray skies of Cherbourg to the sun and light of Mantua was a happy change. Whether it was justice or not, it is the moment to close the chapter, unless I am to be led on to further depressing details from the sire's own record of crime and punishment in the sixteenth century.

The Godson of the Sire and Other Pirates

Piracy in the sixteenth century was a career that called alluringly to the adventurous, promising quick returns in one form or another, death or fortune. Unlawful though it was, it throve unchecked on the coasts of Normandy and Brittany, and was especially pronounced in the Channel Islands. There existed in every port men "whose heads were filled with wind, with oars for arms," great captains whose exploits have lived to this day. They built their own boats in the harbors along the coast and these once launched, they sailed forth on a favoring wind to seize what prey Heaven sent their way. Every man was for himself. Governor Cornish of Jersey fitted out a ship to rove the seas, which had a prosperous course, holding up rich merchantmen and sailing home with the booty, until one day, returning from a three-months' cruise laden with a rich cargo, she fell into the hands of Norman pirates who took her into Le Havre.

Out from Saint-Malo came Guillaume Michelet with his gay marauders, sending four galleys across to harry the English coast in search of food for the Saint-Malo garrison.

The governor of Brittany, who had a fine taste in beer, asked no questions and gladly accepted those casks of the best which was made in the Channel Islands.

The pages of the Journal are shot through with sidelights on the ways of these gallant highwaymen of the sea. Our Sire de Gouberville had no scruples, it appears. He sold them his tallest, straightest trees to make the masts for their ships and drank a glass of wine at the chantey with Captain François Le Clerc, known as *Jambe de Bois*, a corsair whose audacity has become legendary. We see in the Journal, March 25, 1555, this Captain Le Clerc receiving Admiral de Coligny

who was on a tour of inspection in Basse Normandie. He was, in fact, one of the bravest sailors that the Cotentin produced in the time of François I, and Henri II finally raised him to the peerage in 1551, in a letter which reads:

We, in consideration of the great service rendered by our dear and well-loved François Le Clerc, one of the captains in our navy (as well to the late-honored King, my father, whom God have in his mercy, as to ourselves), both on land and sea where he has continually exposed his person in infinite danger and with such hardihood and valor that he is worthy of praise and especial recompense, being greatly wounded in his members, having lost a leg and an arm much mutilated, we [etc.]

Thevet, the historian, also extols his valor and recounts the landing of the French on the island of Palma in the Canaries, "which was sacked in my time, during the war between Charles V and Henri II, king of France, by a Norman corsair named François Le Clerc, called *Jambe-de-Bois*, a brave man with whom I have sometimes sailed."

A daughter of this Le Clerc married Nicolas Hennot, Sieur d'Arreville, who was Gilles de Gouberville's successful rival at Blois.

But the three pirates with whom Gilles de Gouberville was on more intimate terms were Peter-Cappon, Malesart and de Raffoville. Cantepye sailed with Peter-Cappon and took part in an engagement with a Flemish ship, in which they were being worsted, when an English ship, coming out from Guernsey, captured both French and Flemish ships and held them for ransom.

Word of the prizes that were captured and brought in triumph to the shore was quickly spread through the country and we see our seigneur after mass and dinner of a Sunday, taking his way, accompanied by the vicar, along the coast to Barfleur, where he beheld with his own eyes strange spices from far Guinea and the ivory "teeth of elephants."

That little port has witnessed some strange scenes; for

example, on the day when the General from Caen, the Sire de Gouberville and other notables inspected the ship of Captain La Chapelle, who was just back from Africa with an exotic cargo. They were received by the filibustering captain, who discoursed to them upon strange lands and peoples, and finally brought forward from the hold, as living proof of his distant voyages, the bewildered Negroes, one of whom he presented as a gift to the General.

Captain Malesart was the son of Robine de la Mer, who had an inn at Cherbourg where Gilles de Gouberville often stopped for a drink. This Malesart spread abroad the news that he was fitting out a ship for a voyage to Peru, magic name of a magic country scarcely discovered at that day, a land where gold was to be had for the picking. The lure of gain, the taste for adventure, the old fighting spirit, were alive in all the wild youth of the countryside, who hastened to offer their services. Among others was our Symonnet. Harebrain that he was, he ran off at once to sign on and then announced the news to his devoted patron and half brother, who was broken-hearted at the thought of losing the young rascal on so long a voyage. In Greek, the sire enters his sorrow in the Journal.

I have not stirred from here. Overcome with trouble, more unhappy than I have ever been. [The next day, still in Greek]: My unhappiness grows. I cannot bear it and have written to Malesart begging him to send Symonnet back.

But Symonnet was not the only one at Mesnil beguiled by the magic of Peru. Arnould and Cantepye were sent to carry the missive from the sire to Malesart and with them went Thomas Drouet, who "without a word to his mother, his wife, his children or the others in his house," signed on with Malesart. Malesart, wishing to remain on good terms with Gilles de Gouberville, dismissed the recalcitrant Symonnet. That

night, again in Greek, the bon sire writes: "My trouble is over. Symonnet has returned."

However, there is Jehanne, the wife of Thomas Drouet who objected strongly to her husband shipping on a voyage halfway around the world, leaving her to mind the farm. She prevailed on the seigneur with her complaints, until he found a substitute for her husband, and Thomas Drouet, as well as Symonnet, was returned to the bosom of his family.

And now comes the joke. Malesart's objective was not Peru, but the little island of Aurigny off the Cap de la Hague within sight of Cherbourg. It was in the hands of the English, and secrecy was necessary to the success of the attack. When did he reveal to his crew, then, their real destination? Did he wait until they were off the island, strike an attitude and cry "Here is your Peru!" and with fiery words quicken them to the audacious enterprise? He must have been a man of genius to turn them from their dreams of South America to the reality of Aurigny. But he did it, for on June 1, 1558, we read: "Malesart today took the island of Aurigny." What did Symonnet and Drouet say to that? Perhaps they were reconciled to the fate that kept them at home.

Two days later, we read:

Saint John's Eve. After dinner we went to Cherbourg to see Captain Malesart. He was selling the cattle, which he had taken on the island, to the highest bidder. We all went to the ship, des Hachées, La Tronque, Symonnet and several others, where the Captain made great cheer for us and at our departure fired five of the big pieces of artillery which he had aboard, in our honor. It was night when we reached home.

This expedition was too successful not to be repeated, though the second time it had somewhat the character of a picnic in which everyone was included: Gilles de Gouberville, Symonnet, Cantepye, Charlot, Thomas Drouet, all set sail about an hour after midnight and found themselves at day-

break at Aurigny, where they landed. The following day, Sunday:

all the company remained on the island and made great cheer. I dined with Captain Malesart and supped and slept with the *Sieur de Sideville*. All day long, we walked about the island to see the forts. As I had been ill on the sea, I slept with *Denneville* in the fort all the morning, till dinner. Monday, after breakfast, we embarked in *Clement Liés'* boat with the *Sieur de Désart*, a young Italian named Master Anthony, Symonnet, Thomas Drouet, and landed at Saint-Germain. Took horses to go to the Manor of Saint-Naser and from there took other horses to come home.

It may be noted that this band of marauders (because that is what they were), rode straight to the house of the Lieutenant of the Admiral. Evidently the navy winked at piracy. It is extraordinary too, that there is not a word concerning any resistance by the people of Aurigny, nor of what had become of them while the invaders were walking over the island and sleeping and eating in their houses. A week later, however, the tide turned.

July 6 — The son of Michael Cassi tells me that the English are in Aurigny and that Captain Malesart evaded the English fleet and is back with his ship and more cattle.

Went to see my fields at Tourlaville and from there to Galé where we went on board Malesart's ship which was in the dock.

What must we think when a month later we find some of the Aurigny cattle in the herd of Mesnil-au-Val?

In 1561, Malesart was still a sea rover coming to see Gilles de Gouberville at the manor and bringing him "a mirror of crystal broken in three pieces," but even so, precious enough to be mentioned in the *Journal*.

Of these Norman corsairs, the boldest was Gilles de Gouberville's own godson and namesake, Gilles le Marchant, *Sieur de Raffoville*.

He was married, though all we know of the bride is in this note:



MANOR OF SAINT-NASER NEAR GRÉVILLE, 1932

FROM A PENCIL SKETCH BY ROMILLY FEDDEN

This was the home of Madame de Saint-Naser, Gilles de Gouberville's sister.

Sunday, July 8, 1554 — I went to the wedding of my cousin de Raffoville, Symonnet and Lajoie with me. At three o'clock there arrived the Sieur du Tot, his mother and his sister, whom de Raffoville married. Then we dined. After dining, we had supper. It was dark when we left.

Where, in his wild scheme of life, could de Raffoville have found place for a wife? And what could she have made of the dark deeds done at his manor? Where was she the night of the martyrdom of Denis, the peasant? Where on the day when her husband rushed upon his doom?

De Raffoville had no grade in the navy. He built his ships, fitted them out and sailed under no orders but his own. And that he was successful, may be judged from the following entries:

February 11, 1556 — Symonnet went to the house of my godson de Raffoville and brought me the news that he is back from sea, where he has been for a month, and that he has taken prizes valued at 200,000 ducats and that he will be here to see me tomorrow.

February 12 — My godson came to find me at Gouberville and we had breakfast together, then he went with me to mass. He went on to see Beaurepayre at Chennot's, to meet Sideville and Navarre who were waiting for him there.

We hear of these two individuals in the following year, when they made an attempt on de Raffoville's life.

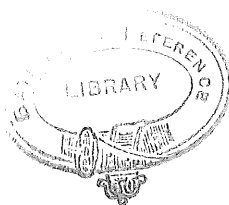
May 6, 1557 — Symonnet went this morning to Caplévy to talk to my godson de Raffoville, but he was at his house.

May 11 — Today Symonnet went again to The Hague to talk to de Raffoville, which he could not do as he had gone aboard his ship, and Symonnet could find no boat to go out, as the tide was so low the boats were out of water.

May 25 — Symonnet went yesterday to Saint-Pierre-Église and Barfleur to find de Raffoville and only came back today. He helped Raffoville at Barfleur to measure and cart grain to Saint-Pierre.

May 26 — Cantepye went to Saint-Pierre and talked over my affairs with Jehan Binet and my godson de Raffoville.

May 28 — At three o'clock, Julian and Jacques Feuillye, who went



yesterday to Gouberville, arrived each one with a horse and cart, each holding 90 bushels of wheat that they got at Barfleur from de Raffo-ville's prize.

This considerable capture of grain was very timely, as the year 1557 saw a shortage, and a consequent rise in the price of wheat.

One cannot help wondering if the bon sire had any stake himself in de Raffo-ville's ventures. If he did not, why was he so anxious to get news of him and why should Cantepye, when the seigneur was ill, discuss his "affairs" with de Raffo-ville? What affairs? His share of the grain which he receives two days later? The division of the spoils must have led to many complications and may be the reason for the attack the following autumn.

November 1, 1557 — Monday, All Saints' Day, first day of the month — I have not stirred from here. It was after midday when mass was over. Coming back from vespers, where we had a sermon by a Franciscan brother from Valognes, the servants of my cousin de Bretteville who came for the pigs, told me that my cousin de Raffo-ville had been attacked today in the church of Saint-Pierre, during the reading of the Gospel, by Sideville, Saint-Martin, Navarre and several other accomplices.

The same day after I came back from vespers, Cantepye arrived and told me that he had come back from Valognes with one of those who had attacked de Raffo-ville, who had been to fetch a barber to dress de Raffo-ville's wounds. That he was badly wounded by a pistol shot through his left shoulder, and he described to Cantepye how it had happened in the church of Saint-Pierre-Église during the Gospel. After supper it froze, beautiful moonlight, but very cold. I sent Cantepye, Symonnet and Thomas Drouet to find out the news for certain. A little before daylight Drouet returned and told me that seventeen of those who had attacked the Sieur de Raffo-ville were still in his house, master of his person and his property. Before sunrise Cantepye and Symonnet came back and told me that the company had left at moonset, about two hours before daylight, and that my godson sent messages to me and was not as bad as they said.

Was this a revenge of corsair upon corsair? An epilogue

to some expedition of shared danger? The good abbé regards it as such, although he never knew de Raffo-ville as he is revealed in a document found by chance in the Archives Nationales in Paris in 1900 by M. Paul Le Cacheux. It is a pardon issued by Charles IX to one Guillaume Diénys, a peasant of Saint-Pierre-Église, for his attack on the Seigneur de Raffo-ville, in which is set forth at length the whole shocking circumstances that led up to de Raffo-ville's death.

In this document, de Raffo-ville outdoes any hero of melo-drama. He is a fascinating bandit, committing most atrocious crimes, as feared by his neighbors as by the crews of the ships which he chased, despising the baseborn, who had less value in his eyes than the beasts, and snapping his fingers at king and law. It is impossible to imagine a greater contrast than the life of Gilles de Gouberville and that of his godson: the one a quiet country gentleman, the other a wild buccaneer; the one occupied with his domain, careful of his health and that of his people, arbiter of local quarrels and of all disputes between the peasants, a humane man, showing always a desire to live on good terms with the authorities and to maintain friendly relations with the surrounding proprietors; the other, who had lost all scruples in the course of his life as a pirate, was inured to fighting, held his own life as cheap as that of the next man, lived rather as the chief of a band of robbers than as a gentleman in his manor; always at sea or on the road, he seems to have entered his house only to deposit his booty; his exploits on land equaled those at sea and his duels with law and order have nothing in common with the lawsuits which Gilles de Gouberville spent so much time in waging in order to defend his interests and his rights.

Both men, however, were typical of their age. It is in this double aspect that the French nobility of the time appears to us; attached to their native soil yet loving adventure, quarrelsome and rough in manners, counting among them pirates

such as de Raffoville, churchmen like Ravalet, and quiet agriculturists of intelligence and sedentary habits such as Gilles de Gouberville.

The story that is unfolded in that *lettre de grâce* is not a pleasant one. In August, 1561, Gilles Le Marchant, Sieur de Raffoville, with several accomplices, among them two priests, attacked a peasant, Guillaume Diénys, and his brother Jehan, and maltreated them severely. The peasants complained to Lieutenant Bastard at Valognes, who asked them to furnish witnesses to the outrage. But de Raffoville inspired such fear in his neighborhood, that no one would bear witness against him for fear of reprisals.

Some time later, de Raffoville, incensed that such *canaille* should dare to ask for justice, and determined on revenge, pretended to wish to make up the quarrel between the two peasants and the priests and asked the Diénys brothers to meet him in a house at Saint-Pierre-Église. They came in good faith, whereupon they were seized and de Raffoville took away the papers made out against him and left the brothers bleeding from many wounds. Again they protested to Lieutenant Bastard at Valognes, bringing with them a few brave witnesses. The Lieutenant, on the evidence, adjudged damages to the peasants to be paid in food and live stock by de Raffoville. In default of payment, they could seize the cattle and sell it for themselves; which, considering the character of the gentleman with whom they had to deal, seems like asking them to put their heads into the lion's mouth.

Some days later, as Guillaume Diénys was walking along a road leading two of the beasts that he had taken in default of payment, he met de Raffoville mounted, in coat of mail, armed with arquebus and pistol. The peasant was seized and thrown to the ground, his cows taken, and he was then tied up and carried to the manor where he was kept for a week, before he succeeded in escaping by a "secret" door.

His brother was less fortunate. He had taken some animals, according to the judgment, belonging to one of the priests. The day before the market at Quettehou, he led them into the village and gave them into the hands of the sergeant to keep until the morrow when he should sell them at auction. That night de Raffoville arrived with an armed band, broke open the stable, took the animals, shot a number of people, seized the unfortunates Jean, cut off his nose and ears and put out his eyes, then tied him to the tail of his horse and marched him two miles to his manor where he burned him alive in his oven.

However accustomed to violence the people were, this outrage caused some commotion. The mother and the brother of the murdered man again addressed themselves to the court at Valognes and a warrant was taken out for the arrest of de Raffoville, who, undaunted, simply entrenched himself in his manor and defied Bastard's emissaries. The lieutenant, finally aroused, appealed to the Parliament in Rouen for permission to use arms to enforce the orders. To this the Duc de Bouillon assented.

A sergeant with a small band presented himself at the gate of de Raffoville's manor and read the order of arrest in a loud voice. He was answered by a volley of shot. The sergeant retired. But on October 24, 1563, he returned with the hope of taking de Raffoville by a ruse. He and his men hid, in the night, in a house near by, and waited for de Raffoville to show himself. At daybreak he came out of the door of the manor and started for a stable, half-roofed with thatch. The sergeant ordered his people to cut off his retreat, but de Raffoville saw them, rushed into the stable and barricaded the door. The sergeant outside read the warrant, to which de Raffoville replied in a fury of oaths.

Mort Dieu, cowards! Rabble! I defy you and the King! I will never give in. To hell with the King and the Law! [Then raising his voice

he shouted to his servant:] Laurent de Cour, fire the cannon on this mob, shoot them to pieces, set the dogs on them! Go to the parishes and ring the bells to assemble the people. Call de Fermanville, de Neville and de Corneville! Rally all our friends!

The servants rushed to obey. While some went to rally the gentlemen of the country, the rest let fire with all the arms in the manor. Then followed a hand-to-hand fight; the sergeant and his men against the servants, surging about the stable. Suddenly it was seen that the thatch had caught fire. Nearly suffocated by the smoke, de Raffoville came out. His surrender was demanded. He asked if there was a gentleman present. The Sieur de Buisson advanced and gave his name. De Raffoville said that he did not know him, and refused to give himself up. Then suddenly seizing a pitchfork he tried to fight his way through the crowd, but he was overcome and fell, pierced by many wounds. He was then tied. But at that moment the servants with the Sieurs de Fermanville, de Corneville and others arrived. The sergeant and his band met them armed. They saw de Raffoville a prisoner and followed quietly in the crowd that escorted him to Barfleur.

When they arrived at Barfleur, de Raffoville was taken to the inn of François Le Blond where he consented to have his wounds dressed. His friends de Fermanville and de Corneville had supper with him. After supper they had some talk, of which a few words were overheard: "Come back at the hour I have told you. Bring your men!" After his guests had left, de Raffoville again asked to have his wounds dressed and then went to bed, the innkeeper lying down beside him and the sergeant, Guillaume Diénys and four other men on guard in the room.

At midnight the inn was surrounded, doors and windows were broken in and the attacking party tried to penetrate to the bedchamber where the sergeant and the others held the door. Meanwhile de Raffoville, hearing the noise, leaped from

his bed and seized a sword, but he had reckoned without his wounds. The bandages were loosened, blood poured from his side and he fell to the floor dead.

Such was the end of the godson of Gilles de Gouberville.

Wars of Religion in the Cotentin

Gilles de Gouberville was twenty-seven years of age in 1549, when he began his Journal. He was living a peaceful life, under the happiest conditions, and through the years that follow he unrolls for us a picture of the existence of a country gentleman occupied with rural pursuits in the midst of a friendly and confiding people. But in 1562 a different note makes itself heard. He was now forty, he had returned from Blois, where, though he failed to get the appointment as Maître des Eaux et Forêts, he was at least confirmed in his position as Lieutenant des Eaux et Forêts. The entries in his Journal are now fuller and express his personal feelings, which reflect the unrest abroad and the gravity of the moment. He gives us an unexpected chapter in the history of the religious wars in Normandy, as revealed in his own experience.

The great wave of the Reformation which had swept over Europe had reached even to the Cotentin. As early as 1553 Protestant ministers driven from England by Queen Mary had taken refuge in the Channel Isles. From there they had made their way into Normandy. The first Protestant sermon in the Cotentin was preached in 1554, near Saint-Lô, on the property of Sainte-Marie d'Agneaulx, by a monk of Spanish origin, named Soler, who had had a church in Jersey. Before that, meetings had been held in a cavern known as the Clos Varroc, but called by the country people The Devil's Pulpit, in the grounds of the Château of Bricqueville-Colombières, belonging to the son-in-law of the Comte de Montgomery, all of whose connections, the families of Pierrepont, Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, Saint-Marcouf, Richier de Cerisy, Guiton d'Argouges and many more, had embraced the new religion; for it was among the aristocracy that the new faith had found

its strongest supporters — men of authority who were leaders ready-made to the cause.

The Church should have been able to combat the heresy at once in every village and cathedral town, but, as we have seen, no one — from bishop to curé — occupied himself with his duties, and all that any one of them asked was to reap the benefits of his office. The Bishop of Coutances was never seen in his cathedral, the curés of the villages turned over their churches to vicars who paid them a small sum for the benefice. There was neither example nor precept in the churches of the Cotentin with which to fight the new religion, and the highest dignitaries in the Church were even suspected of sympathy with the schism and showed indifference to its progress. In 1557 the Bishop of Coutance named as prebendary of Junéville a famous heretic, one George Buchanan, who had been chased from Scotland because of his satires against the monks.

Everywhere in the kingdom the new doctrines had won followers and in every class; the Connétable de Montmorency and his brother the Admiral de Coligny, le Roi de Navarre, le Prince de Condé, Antoine de Bourbon and his wife Jeanne d'Albret, had all embraced the Protestant faith, and formed a group of princes of the Bourbon house which was formidable. The Catholic party was headed by Henri II and his Valois brothers, the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duc de Guise. In spite of repressive legislation and punishment, when Henri II died in 1559, there were already two thousand reformed churches in the kingdom, principally in the Midi.

François II was a child of fifteen. On his accession the power was seized by his uncles, the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the Duc de Guise, who, to consolidate their own position, used the new religion as an excuse to ostracize the Bourbon princes who were of the blood royal and whose adhesion to the reformed faith was taken as a pretext to exclude them from power.

The year 1560 saw the whole country torn by this struggle between factions animated by passions which, in the leaders, were more personal and political than religious. Suddenly, on December 4, 1560, François II died and was succeeded by his brother, Charles IX, aged nine, under the regency of his mother, Catherine de' Medici.

The Queen at once announced a liberal policy; the Huguenots in prison were to be set free; lawsuits against them on religious grounds were to be stopped; those who had been banished were to be recalled; those who had been sent to the galleys were to be pardoned. It is true that the Act ended by a clause stating that all were to become Catholics, but no one paid any attention to that. This liberal edict gave to the Protestant faith the greatest impetus yet received. Up to this time the cult had been followed more or less in secret, but now its adherents came into the open. Many people, some out of curiosity, others genuinely attracted by the simplicity of the new religion, flocked to the services. The new faith spread with incredible rapidity; yet, though its members had demanded freedom of conscience, now that it was granted, they evinced as virulent an intolerance of the Catholics as ever the Catholics had shown to them.

The Abbé Tollemer, viewing the Sire de Gouberville's actions from a Catholic standpoint, believes him to have been a convert to the reformed faith, but finds him wanting in courage to proclaim his belief. To us it seems as if his sympathies, as well as those of most of his friends, were in the Huguenot camp, but that, holding an office under the king, he tried to keep a middle course, loyal to his sovereign in that he would not take arms against him, and loyal to his friends whenever it was possible to aid them. It was a difficult position for a peaceable country gentleman.

January 14, 1561 — Before it was day, Arnould and Th. Drouet went to Valognes to hear a sermon preached by the Sieur des Moulins. It was night when they returned.

April, 1561 — Easter Monday, before daybreak I left Russy, Noël with me, and arrived at Saint-Clément about seven o'clock, where there was a crowd assembled from the Bessin and from the Cotentin; I found Monsieur de Sainte-Marie du Mont, his wife and several other ladies and gentlemen who had come to hear a sermon which was preached between eight and nine o'clock, in the court of the presbytery. I found my cousin de Quesnay there. Nearly a hundred people on horseback crossed the ferry.

In 1562, the nobles of the Cotentin were divided into three camps: the Huguenots led by the Comte de Montgomery; a second party favorable to the Protestants, but loyal to the king, under the Duc de Bouillon; and the Catholic party led by the Comte de Matignon, which was opposed to both the other parties.

Matignon had appointed the Sieur de Cartot, a declared enemy of the Protestants, as governor of the citadel at Valognes. The Duc de Bouillon was at Caen, the capital of Normandy.

It is on April 27, 1562, that we find the first mention of bloodshed in the cause of religion: "On my way to Gouberville, I passed by Raffoville, where I was told that Monsieur de Guise had murdered a minister of the reformed faith."

The origin of this rumor was the massacre of two hundred Protestants with the pastor Leonard Morel from Geneva, at Vassy, on March first by the Duc de Guise, which was the beginning of civil war.

From that moment, the Cotentin was filled with unrest. Gilles had all the locks of the doors of the house and garden strengthened.

The Abbé de Cherbourg has had all his furniture carried to Cherbourg because of a rumor this morning that the forests are full of Huguenots who intend to attack the abbey. And because of this foolish report and for other reasons, the Sieur de Magneville, Baron de la Haye-du-Puits and the Captain of the Château of Cherbourg, turned all the judges,

advocates and barristers out of the town of Cherbourg. The people of the town were very much alarmed. I left there at noon and I talked for a long time with Monsieur de Saint-Naser, sheltered under a boat; it was raining hard.

We can imagine the intensity of their preoccupations. Here as elsewhere it was the most intelligent class of the community, the men of law, who were suspected of sympathy with the Protestant party.

Later, in the month of May, 1562, Gilles journeyed to Coutances and Avranches, his object being to preside at the sale of timber in the forests of Périers and Beauficel. The sale was over on the fourteenth and he started for Russy and slept at Vire, where the arrival of himself and his party was the occasion for a demonstration on the part of the townsfolk.

We reached Vire after sundown to deposit the papers of the auction there. The people of the town assembled outside the house of the Lieutenant, demanding to know who we were [fearing they were Huguenots]. They thought that we carried arquebuses and pistols. We were there talking to the Lieutenant. There were at least 200 people in the street.

He arrived at Bayeux on the sixteenth. "They told us in Bayeux that last Tuesday the reformers had cast down all the images and altars in the great church; and we saw the ruins and fragments of these ourselves." All the other churches in Bayeux and the *faubourgs* had suffered in the same way. Already at Caen, though the sire had not yet heard of it, the great churches of Saint-Etienne and La Trinité had been profaned, the windows, the organs, the carvings broken, the great tombs of William the Conqueror and Queen Matilda overturned and their bones scattered; but to which side the guilt was due, it is hard to say, as the soldiers of both parties were out of hand. Back at Russy he gives us further proof of the interest that drew everyone to hear the new doctrines. He uses the new terms *temple* and *ministre*, the Protestant terms for church and priest, which survive today in France.

Sunday morning, before seven — Pentecost — we went to hear a sermon preached by the minister, Sieur de Villez, which he gave in the temple at Saint-Malo; we returned to dinner at Russy. After dinner we went to hear the sermon at Estreham.

[The next day] at daybreak we left Russy for Carentan where we arrived before eight in the morning. At nine o'clock we were present at the sermon preached by the Sieur des Moulins. We dined at the Image de Notre Dame.

But the end to which these meetings tended was not pacific. Already there were alarms in the Cotentin. "From Carentan we went on and slept at Valette with my cousin Le Verrier, Advocat du Roi. Between nine and ten, as we were going to bed, we heard the tocsin sounded."

Our bon sire seems to have been in great haste to sleep that night, as he did not succumb to his usual curiosity. Did he fear that those who had been present at the sermons would be suspect? He could easily have found out the next day what had happened at Valognes and have told us, since he left La Valette about seven in the morning. "I met Monsieur de Hautebye and spent an hour with him, going with him as far as the Croix Bauquet." But not a word about the tocsin of the night before.

There is nothing during the next fortnight to give any indication of the agitation in the country, except the entry of June 5. He had been expecting an important letter from the Lieutenant de l'Amiral de la Hague, which had not arrived.

I asked him if he had written, as he had promised. He said no, that he could not find a man to carry a letter because there is neither a town nor a borough between here and Paris, where you would not be stopped and searched.

Then came the clash.

June 7 — I sent Symonnet to Valognes to get my shoes and a pair of slippers at Lagarde's. He came back after sundown and told me that when he reached Beaumont, he heard the tocsin sounded at Valognes.

The next day he knew the reason:

This afternoon I hear that last evening, there was an uprising of the Catholics at Valognes, that they killed the Sieur de Houesville, the Sieur de Cosqueville, Maistre Gilles Michault, the doctor, Gilles Lauvet, the tailor, Robert de Verdun and Jehan Giffart and others wounded; and de Cosqueville's house pillaged and destroyed; and the bodies of those killed were still lying in the street today after noon; and the women of Valognes were still stoning and beating the bodies. I was also told that the house of Maistre Estienne Lesney, Sieur de Haultgars, had been pillaged and destroyed. Charlot left at once for Valognes to ascertain the truth and came back after sundown to tell me that it was all true and that the people of Valognes were greatly excited.

The following Tuesday, June 10, was the day of the Assizes at Valognes.

But because of the excitements of Sunday, I did not go; for I did not think that there would be any court. After lunch I started for Gouberville, Symonnet with me.

The next day, June 11, was the date of the regular inspection of the forests. Did he wish to escape from the necessity of finding himself at a meeting where there would surely be expressions of opinion on the burning question of the hour?

Charlot went early to carry a letter from me to the Sieur de Cyffrevast and one to the Procureur du Roy, concerning the inspection of the forests which should take place tomorrow, suggesting that it should be postponed. . . . The Sire de Cyffrevast, the Curé de Cherbourg and the Senescal agreed that the inspection should be postponed. I sent a letter to La Boussaye, the meeting place, by Charlot, which he gave to the Sieur de Tourlaville whom he found there. Tourlaville read it aloud to those present and the people dispersed.

June 12 — Saint Vast . . . and Rauville . . . came here and they talked for two hours with the Advocat du Roi and me of what happened on Sunday at Valognes. They had witnessed most of what was done.

Notwithstanding the absence of all comment on the events, we gather that Gilles de Gouberville was not feeling very

easy at the thought of Messieurs de Cosqueville and Houesville who had fallen victims to their zeal for the reformed faith.

June 13 — This morning I sent Symonnet to Gouberville, to find a boat for the Bessin, to carry some casks to Russy and to take at the same time some chests full of clothes and of papers, because of the tumults, excitements and seditions, in the name of religion, which have taken place and still continue at Valognes.

It seems evident that the casks were an excuse to send the papers and clothing to a more secure place.

How unsafe Valognes was thought to be, we may gather from this note:

Today, in the evening, they came to tell me that M. Lefebvre, tax receiver in Valognes, had sent his two little boys and his little girl, to Auvrey's because of the troubles in Valognes. I left here to go and see them. When we arrived, they were putting them to bed. I talked to Messire Jehan and to Gilles' wife who was undressing the children, whom I went up to see in their room; then I came back.

Monday, 15 June — As Arnould and Charlot and Bertin took the horses to water at the Barrier this morning a cart passed laden with chests and clothes belonging to the Sieur de Sausmenil. The carters said that they were going to Cherbourg, because the Protestants (*Christandins*) had taken Montebourg last night, but that no one had been wounded on either side. In the afternoon Cantepye came from Cherbourg and at once after, M. l'Advocat le Verrier arrived with Chaslus and Symonnet who had come from Toqueville; and they told me that there were a thousand men, on foot and on horseback, of the "Reformed" party who should arrive tomorrow in the morning or afternoon in Valognes, according to the agreement made with those of Valognes, and that they were being paid and that it was hoped that all would end peaceably.

He was mistaken. The two Sieurs de Sainte-Marie (du Mont et d'Aigneaux) had marched from Saint-Lô to Montebourg and arrived before Valognes with 700 men where they were joined by 1,500 men from Caen, two big guns and munitions. They had come to avenge the murders of June 8. Sainte-

Marie d'Agneaux was detached and marched with 500 men to fetch the cannon from the Fort of Tatihou, on the coast. On his way back he sacked the Château of Lestre, where Gilles de Gouberville had spent the night on his journey to Blois. The Huguenots took Valognes on June 17 and inflicted terrible reprisals in blood and pillage.

On June 16, Madame de Saint-Naser sent word to her brother that she was ill and would like him to come to her. This he could not do because, as he explained, he had "a pain in his side"; also, partly because he had heard that Monseigneur de Matignon, the Catholic leader, was in the outskirts of Cherbourg in the very country by which he must pass to reach Saint-Naser. Matignon liked neither the reformed faith nor any whom he suspected of sympathy with it.

Today, Guillaume Berger tells me that Monseigneur de Matignon has arrived at Cherbourg accompanied by seven or eight score of horse, and that he had slept at the abbey, because they would not let him enter the town.

June 17 — I am told that Monseigneur de Matignon is assembling the country people to march upon Valognes, to meet the forces of Monsieur de Sainte-Marye and Agneaulx. Captain de Gouberville left here yesterday to gather his people to go to Cherbourg, where the rallying point is, to march from there against the Huguenots who are at Valognes.

[Same day] — About one o'clock at night, Marquet, of Digoville, coming from Valognes, stopped and said that Le Sieur de Matignon had entered Valognes with all his force. As soon as I heard this, I mounted with Pinchon and Nicolas Drouet and left for Gouberville, where we arrived about an hour after sunrise. As soon as I had reached Gouberville, I sent Myaulx Gaillard to Mesnil to get the news from Valognes, then I went to bed, as I had not slept all night. Before I was up, Myaulx had returned. He said that he had spent an hour and a half at Mesnil but could hear nothing new; because of which I do not believe that Matignon entered Valognes last night as they said. In the afternoon, about four, Charlot Brucan arrived at Gouberville and told us all that during the night, de Matignon (who had entered Valognes)

and the Protestant chiefs at Valognes had come to terms. At eight o'clock I mounted and returned to Mesnil.

June 21 — I was ill all day from the effects of the distress, worry and trouble that I had had since Thursday.

The peaceful days at Mesnil-au-Val were at an end.

The three parties in Valognes had come to an understanding. The fortress was to be placed under the Duc de Bouillon, who replaced the Catholic Governor, de Cartot, by de Moussy.

June 30 — We went, the *Advocat du Roi* — his cousin le Verrier — and I to the court at Valognes together. The Sieur de Moussy, whom the M. le Duc de Bouillon yesterday, being in Valognes, made captain and governor of the château of this place, caused his commission as captain and governor of this place to be read by the clerk, P. Collas.

Is it not significant that the first day that Gilles de Gouberville makes his reappearance at Valognes should be that on which the authority of Matignon and de Cartot ceases?

July 1 — François Deamours coming from Haye-du-Puits, after talking with Monsieur le Duc de Bouillon, passed by here. He gave me a copy of a letter that the Sieur de Magneville had written, showing that peace has been made between Monseigneur le Prince de Condé and Monseigneur de Guise.

This was the famous "reconciliation" forced by the king, at whose order the Prince de Condé and the Duc de Guise had embraced. They could say in parting, "We are reconciled. We have kissed. We part enemies for life."

The sire's once tranquil life was now a prey to alarms, at whose bidding he moved on July 19 from Mesnil to Russy, only to find himself menaced by the Catholic army before Rouen. Saint-Samson, his man of affairs, counseled him to return to the Cotentin.

He tells me to take my fat stock in from pasture and my other belongings, because the rumor is that the Duc d'Aumale is coming to besiege Caen and lay waste all the country of the Bessin; both the land

of the Papists and Huguenots, and make all alike pay ransom, as they have done in the *pays de Caux*.

On the twenty-first he sent Saint-Sanson to Bayeux for news, who reported that the Duc d'Aumale was encamped with his army at Honfleur. And the next day he talked for an hour with his cousin de Hupain, "who tells me that the soldiers from Bayeux yesterday visited the Sieur Du Bosc and took all his horses away against his will."

And now for a few weeks we see our bon sire pursuing his old existence. He writes of his horses, of his stock, of his crops, of the building he is doing, as if there were no war in Christendom. And yet from one little story, we can glimpse the turmoil that was in many minds.

As I was coming back from Argouettes to Russy, I found the Controlleur Noël from Bayeux and Maistre Jehan France, his recorder, who were walking in the fields. We talked together till we reached the road from Argouges. And as we were talking of religion and of the opinions which today form the subject of great controversy and contradiction between men, France spoke as follows: "let us make a new God, who is neither Papist nor Huguenot; that men may no longer say such a one is heretic, such a one is Huguenot." Then I said: "Unus est Deus ab eterno, et eternus. We cannot make Gods, because we are only men."

CHAPTER XX

Darkening Skies

At last our friend Symonnet was seeing life. He had been left behind on that memorable journey to Blois, but now events had caught up with him and taken him along in their march. When Gilles de Gouberville left Mesnil, Symonnet went with him, but not to remain in the quiet of Russy. He went on to join François at Sorteval. François had for the moment thrown in his lot with the Huguenots and when Symonnet arrived at the manor he was placed in charge of the household at Sorteval, while François left with the Huguenot leader, Sieur Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, for Carentan, where they were to meet the Duc de Bouillon.

It was deemed necessary to leave some one to reassure the women in the house, as it was a moment full of apprehension. Four ships had appeared off the coast and the anxious watchers at Sorteval could not yet be certain that they were not English. They were soon reassured, however, as they proved to be French ships, "the Sieur de Montgomery with artillery and ammunition going to Bayeux"; Montgomery was returning from England where he had embraced the Protestant faith and asked aid of Queen Elizabeth.

The manor household now regained its calm and François, who had returned home, again left, taking Symonnet with him to join the Duc de Bouillon at Caen. François appears to have completely won the duke's confidence, as he was now sent as his emissary to the Comte de Montgomery at Saint-Lô. These entries in the Journal, it may be noted, establish a fact for the historian — the understanding between these two great leaders.

But now, once more in the absence of their protectors, there were further alarms among the ladies at Sorteval at the

appearance of a galleon only half a mile from the coast and they sent an appeal to Gilles de Gouberville, who at once dispatched Noë and Thomas Drouet to sleep at the manor, though, with his usual prudence, he did not go himself.

Indeed he could not, for the Duc de Bouillon, with the intention of forcing the country to show its hand, had called a muster of all the gentlemen of the Bessin at Caen, to take the oath of allegiance to the little King, Charles IX, and the Queen Regent, Catherine de' Medicis. Gilles de Gouberville took the road to Caen. When he arrived he says,

I went at once to the château, where I found my brother and Symonnet just coming out. . . . Supped at my inn, where Pinchon had arrived with the cattle for the morrow's sale. After supper we walked up and down before the great abbey for an hour, the Sieur Dufort, Lescures, Rampan and others from Bayeux whom I did not know. We discussed the troubles and misfortunes which exist between the governors of this kingdom and their subjects.

De Bouillon had taken every precaution for his own security and that of the assemblage which he had convoked.

The town gate to Bourg was not opened till nine o'clock. Monsieur le Duc de Bouillon left the château, crossed the fields and went to hold the muster in the great abbey, where he stopped only a short time. He reëntered the town by the same gate which had been opened after he went to the abbey and which was at once reshut after he entered the town. We had taken the animals in to the market while the gate was open, but now we had to go out by the *Porte au Berger*.

In the midst of these disorders, the bon sire was not unmindful of his interests, and we see the effect of war in another aspect, in his discouraged notes. Again and again the cattle are led along the roads to market and are brought back unsold. "Nothing sold at Trévières." And now at Caen "we sold nothing."

Soon we begin to hear echoes of Symonnet's adventures:

Charlot back from Caen tells me that he could not find Symonnet, and that he was told that my brother François had given him as guide to a

gentleman who came from the party of the Queen Mother to Monseigneur le Duc de Bouillon who has gone on to Cherbourg [where Matignon held the town]. He said that they had both been taken prisoner and conveyed to Havre. . . . After this I went to Sorteval to find out from my brother if this was true. He said that it was, but that he did not believe that Symonnet had been taken to Havre, as he was only acting as guide to this gentleman.

It seems very unfortunate that Symonnet, who had hunted over all the country from Caen to Cherbourg and knew it so well, should have been captured. His fate filled Gilles de Gouberville with the greatest anxiety and in the morning he left for Caen

to get news of the gentleman . . . and Symonnet. . . . I addressed myself to the recorder who told me that Symonnet is back, but that the gentleman has been taken to Havre and that the Sieur de Rusqueville had told him so; Chalus also told me that he had seen Symonnet yesterday. I went to the château to find him, and spoke to de Rusqueville's brother who said he did not know him. I spoke to my brother's landlord who said that he saw him yesterday and Jacques de la Court, a cannoneer at the château, told me that Symonnet had talked with Monseigneur le Duc de Bouillon.

Symonnet was playing his part in affairs at last. But we wish that his talk with the great duke could have been upon more successful matters than that of the capture of the Queen's gentleman. However, better to be brought to the duke's notice in any way than not at all and we trust that he made the most of the opportunity.

The next day, the bon sire hears that Symonnet's mare is at Ardennes and that Symonnet himself is on his way to Sorteval. We may well imagine the meeting and the interest with which they all heard the story of his adventures.

Meanwhile, things were not going too well in the Cotentin. Posthaste from Mesnil came Robert Drouet and Jehan Groult and Gilles Mesnage,

who tell me that François Dauge and his companions last Sunday

pillaged the church at Mesnil and that Thomas Drouet saved the font from destruction, but that Messire Jehan Auvrey, who was there, did not dare to say a word.

The next thing he heard was that

Monsieur de Saint-Naser and my sister are safe, but Guillaume Mesnage, Jehan Gardin and the Drouets have had their houses pillaged and Mesnage was stripped to his shirt. . . . Brisquesque, his brother and sister, Michel du Bosc and his sister-in-law had their houses sacked by order of Guillaume du Bosc, and the business was carried out by his nephew, Nicolas.

Now this is all very confusing, unless we accept the fact of Gilles de Gouberville's Huguenot sympathies, for all these who were attacked by Huguenots in the village of Mesnil were Catholics, yet the manor was left untouched. More than that is confusing. If François is a Huguenot sympathizer, as we must gather from his accompanying Saint-Marie-du-Mont, how do he and Symonnet come to be furthering the cause of the Duc de Bouillon, and apparently in his counsels, unless the duke was much more affected to the Huguenots than was publicly known?

Yes, motives — political and personal — are difficult to disentangle and I am forced to admit that I find our bon sire steering a somewhat unheroic middle course. What else can we think? After reading that the Catholic "François de Lorraine, Chevalier de Malte, brother of the Duc de Guise," who was with Matignon's forces, had come to pay his addresses to the great lady at Briquebec, we read: "I sent Charlot to Briquebec to carry a present to Madame, a kid, a hare and a very fine trout." What do we infer? That he wanted a *sauf conduit* from Matignon, which he received soon after?

Well, they were difficult times; one acted as best one could. Fear stalked abroad, as we see from this:

Between Tollevast and Saint-Aquère, Mangon, Curé of Valognes and his servant were on the road, about the length of a field ahead of us;

when the curé heard us coming, he looked round; and Cantepye said, "I think that's the Curé of Valognes who is going to The Hague; shall we catch up with him?" I said yes and we hurried on. But the curé hearing us coming took to the woods and began to ride as hard as he could. We stopped short when we saw that the curé was frightened and Cantepye called out "Monsieur de Valognes, don't be afraid — friends — friends." We went on and met Robert de Francquesville to whom we recounted the adventure.

Affairs at the market went from bad to worse:

Today I sold eight sheep for XIII livres, which would have been worth an écu apiece, except for the troubles in which we are plunged at present for the cause of the faith, of religion and the veneration of God.

Although Matignon was in possession of Cherbourg, Gilles de Gouberville, with his *sauf conduit* now in his pocket, decided that Mesnil was a safer harbor than Russy, since the forces of both sides were concentrating about Bayeux and Caen. So he took the road back to the Cotentin. There is only weariness and alarm in his Journal now. His health was suffering from his anxieties. As he started on his ride back to Mesnil, he writes "feeling very ill, with a pain in my head and side. I am feeling more weary than ever I can remember."

No sooner had he returned home than he received further disquieting news:

Jacques Feulleye brought me letters from Monsieur de Saint-Naser in which he writes that he has been to Valognes, where there is an assemblage of the gentlemen of this vicomté and that it would be well for me to appear there tomorrow.

[The next day, October 1, 1562] — Although I felt very ill, I went to Valognes, Souville and Charlot with me. It was about nine when I arrived at Denis Lorion's. I went at once to the council room, where Lieutenant Bastard was holding court. He caused several letters or commands of Monseigneur de Matignon to be read. After I had entered the room and after the reading, Lieutenant Bastard being in the chair, addressed me as follows: "Monsieur de Gouberville, do you take the oath to live in obedience to the King, and according to his laws, statutes and ordinances, as the other gentlemen of this *vicomté*

did yesterday, and to give neither aid nor comfort to the mutinous and seditious rebels to his will?" To which I replied in these terms "Yes, Monsieur; it is for that purpose that I have come here today."

At the end of the session, the bon sire had dinner with the Sieur de Gréville and the Sieur de Cyffrevast and after the meal they went to Noël le Bourg's, where the lieutenant was dining with the Abbé de Saint-Sauveur, Quertot, Quinéville Groult, Pinard and several others.

The lieutenant asked me if I took the same oaths as the others. I replied "yes" to all that he had asked me this morning, and said that I wished to live in the law and faith of Our Saviour Jesus Christ and according to the laws of the Holy Roman Church, Catholic and apostolic. I then took my leave and came home.

It looks as if Gilles de Gouberville inspired but slight confidence in the Catholic party.

Matignon had decided to keep a firm hand on the gentlemen of the neighborhood and four days later is recorded:

I went to Valognes, as all the gentlemen of the vicomté were commanded to be present by Monseigneur de Matignon. In the court before Bastard, there was an election of three curés, three gentlemen and three judges to assess the country for three thousand écus a month to pay for a militia guard for this *vicomté*. . . . After dinner we returned to the courtroom to elect a gentleman of this *vicomté* as Captain of the guard which is to be raised. The Sieur d'Esperville was elected. Then Jehan Oger remonstrated angrily that the Sieur d'Esperville was suspect because he and Sainte-Marie-du-Mont were allies. On which the Sieur d'Esperville got angry and declared that notwithstanding his friendship for that gentleman, he would not support the Sieur de Sainte-Marie against reason and right, and he refused the election.

This protest clearly indicates that this Jehan Oger belonged to the most ardent adversaries of reform. His conduct towards Cantepye, who accompanied Gilles de Gouberville, shows also his suspicions towards the Seigneur of Mesnil; for we read further:

I went to dinner at Lorion's, Monsieur de Saint-Naser, etc., with me.

Cantepye went home before dinner because Jehan Oger endeavored to raise a public manifestation against him; which he would have done, had not Bastard commanded him to be quiet.

A few days later, Cantepye was obliged to sign the oath of allegiance to the king and his laws as the other gentlemen had done.

But worse was in store for Gilles de Gouberville:

Saturday, the last day of October, All Saints' Eve, I went to Valognes. After dinner we went to the "Manoir l'Evesque" for the auction of the forest rights as usual. As I mounted the steps to the court, Thomas Le Jués and Guillaume Gardin were disputing in a loud voice and Jués called Gardin a fool (*sot*). . . . I told Jués to be quiet or I would fine him L sols and to make way for me to pass. He replied most arrogantly with these words: "I have as good a right here as you, by the franchises of Valognes; I won't be quiet." Thereupon I replied to Jués: "I fine you L sols and if you do not stop talking, I will double it." To which he answered "I appeal from you and I accuse you of having been present at the pillage and sacking of the houses and churches of this town; I appeal to the people; I call them against you." I took the Sieur de Tourlaville, the Verdier de Valognes who were present and others as witnesses; then entered the court where we were till seven.

The next day he went straight to Lieutenant Bastard to complain of the insult made me by his nephew and cousin, Th. Jués, yesterday. I begged him to see that justice was done me. This he promised me, in Charlot's presence whom I had taken with me. After a long talk on that and other matters, we went together to the cemetery (it was the *Jour des Morts*) where we found many gentlemen, in whose presence he promised to see justice done me by Jués. Then I went to hear a sermon by a Franciscan at the Church.

[Two days later] — I again went to see Lieutenant Bastard with Monsieur de Saint-Naser to ask him to keep the promise he had made me Sunday about Jués. He said yes, but that he had not seen him since. And then he said "He knows very well what he ought to do, but he is keeping out of my way. However, I will see that you have justice done you, so that you will be satisfied." Then he went to court.

Honied words thus far, which meant nothing, as on November 10 he records that as he was in court

the Lieutenant Vaultier was in the chair, when the Lieutenant Bastard passed and said that he had spoken to his nephew Thomas Jués, touching the insulting words he had spoken to me; and that there was little to be done, that I might act as I thought best.

Gilles de Gouberville makes no comment on this nor does he mention it again, but he must have felt deeply that times had changed from the happy days when he, clothed in the honor of his name and office, met his friends at the fortnightly assizes; when they went on together, after court, to Denis Lorion's for food and further talks; when they returned to finish the business at court and then, mounting their horses, rode their several ways without a care. Here was the beginning of a new order of things; Jehan Oger dares to speak against the Sieur d'Esperville and now, this ribald Jués goes unpunished for his insult towards himself as man and officer.

The next day he hears that "the Controller of Cherbourg has been arrested and taken — no one knows where." A few days later his own tailor, Thomas Girard, whom we have often seen stitching the sire's fine clothes in the kitchen, is arrested. So too, is that favorite barber of his, Richard Le Gros, at Montebourg.

In February,

Lajoye came from Russy. He tells me that Admiral de Coligny is before Touques, Monsieur de Rohan at Caen and that the troops in the château are fighting those in the town and that the Sieur de Colombières is before Bayeux.

Though things were looking black for the Huguenots, Mesnil became at this moment a refuge for the fugitives fleeing from Bayeux. They were hidden in the manor and passed on at night. "In the evening seven men and two carts full of chests came here from Madame Hotot." Every day brought its disquieting news.

As we were at supper Tassin Nostradamus came from Valognes where he had seen the Sieur de Crosville whom the soldiers from Villarmoyes

had seized and were taking to Cherbourg, with two cartloads of his furniture and a drove of his cattle. The people of Valognes were very angry.

The brother of M. de Saint-Naser, the Canon of Vascognes, was in danger, but a letter from François says "to advise M. de Saint-Naser that his brother is in a safe place."

It is amazing to read how the bon sire, in the midst of all the alarms, went his undisturbed way, supervising his men, continuing the work on his lands, while he enters at night between notes about his farm, "Jehan Auvrey tells me that the Turks are coming with 50,000 men to help the king." He followed the daily round, while Rouen fell before the King's troops and the Catholics became masters of Bayeux, and fugitive Huguenots continued to find bed and food at Mesnil; he plodded on, though the days of prosperity were over, taxes insupportable, and the people, in the words of a popular plaint, turned to the Queen:

Reine, c'est grand pitié, c'est grand pitié, qu'il faille
Pour deux ou trois, voir une infinité
D'hommes preux et vaillants mourir en la bataille,
Chétivement, sans avoir mérité.
Pensez-y, Madame, il ne faut détruire,
A l'apétait de deux ou trois tyrans,
Tout ce Normand pays en peine et martyre
Nous délaisser par la forêt errant. . . .

And it is there, wandering in uncertainty, that our bon sire leaves us; it is there that we must leave him.

Last Days of a Norman Gentleman

The final entry in the part of the Journal that remains to us is for the last day of the year 1562, according to Gilles de Gouberville's reckoning March 24, 1563.

Friday, XXIII, Vigil of March—I have not stirred from here. Cantepye and Chandeaur came from Bricquebec, Chandeaur supped here. I was all day at the Clos-des-Ventes where they were sowing. Symonnet off hunting in the morning and got a hare; his greyhound hurt one of its forepaws rather badly.

The same day I returned XXIII sols VI deniers to Cantepye . . . Guillemain Le Canu and Talbourdin supped and slept here on the way back from the Fair de la Fleurye at Montebourg.

That is all, yet very much in character; the upright man paying his debts, the landowner taking a passionate interest in his fields, the kind heart which felt for the sick, for children and for his dogs, the generous host keeping open house and board.

The Abbé Tollemer had no further knowledge of his idol beyond this date and at that page his acquaintance with Gilles de Gouberville came to an abrupt end. But we are more fortunate.

Close to the little town of Saint-Pierre-Église, through which we have so often passed in company with the sire, stands the Château of Saint-Pierre-Église, which is still in the possession of the descendants of Gillonne, daughter of Madame de Saint-Naser. In 1894 repairs to the muniment room of the château necessitated the removal of the great accumulation of papers which had lain for years on the shelves. The Marquis de Blangy, owner of the château, took this opportunity to have the documents read, with the result that a mass of papers was discovered relating to Gilles de

Gouberville and his family. There is here abundant information which further illumines for us the character of the bon sire and some which we feel sure the abbé would not have welcomed. We can see with what care Gilles de Gouberville kept his papers; here are letters, receipts for monies and tax receipts; a deed dated 1570, giving certain lands to Symonnet, of which he was to enjoy the revenues until his decease, but which, in case of his death without issue, were to revert to the heirs; copies of the rights of Mesnil-au-Val in the forest of Brix and the Mare de Gattemare; many records of the acquisition of land, since he was constantly adding to his patrimony; leases of property to his farmers; the copy of a statement, dated Coutances, 1562, in which the tax receiver accounted for monies, in reply to the remonstrance made by Gilles de Gouberville in 1557; wills of his father and uncle; and several contracts of marriage, among them being one dated 1575, between Pierre Noyon, of the parish of Mautepertus with "Loyse, natural daughter of *noble homme* Gilles de Gouberville of Mesnil and Russy."

From these sources, it is possible to fill, in some measure, the blank between the last page of the Journal in 1562 and the death of Gilles de Gouberville which took place in his Manor of Mesnil-au-Val on March 7, 1578.

Gilles de Gouberville had four illegitimate daughters. The eldest, whose name we do not know, married her father's confidential servant Lajoie, whose full name was Jacques Maillard. They had four children whose presence about the manor must have brought some joy to the bon sire in the midst of his troubles, as he mentions them with great affection in his will. Loyse was the second daughter and the two remaining were Tassine and Jacqueline. When he named the third child Tassine, was he thinking of the sister who "mounted and rode away"? Or did he simply call her by the name that had come into his family on the marriage of his grandfather

with the heiress Tassine d'Orglandes? In either case it is amusing that he should feel that it would please the one or honor the other.

In the later years of Gilles de Gouberville's life, his daughters formed part of his household at the manor where all was changed. Guillemette was in her grave, his irregular life had introduced into his house all the attendant elements of jealousy and resentment, war had brought violence to the country and, although he was but forty-six, the seigneur's health was failing. Ten years before his death, oppressed by a load of anxieties, not the least of which were for his children, he wrote the following piteous letter:

To my brother, Monsieur de Sorteal,

July 10, 1568.

My brother, my friend, you know that I told you at Sorteal when I went over from Russy, that I was ill and that I had no money. Well, it is all true as I told you. And I promise you that at this hour I could not raise ten *livres tournois*, unless I sold my furniture. And for this reason I pray you, for the honor of God and in His Name, not to ask my servants for any after my death which I feel is near, unless God helps me, for you will do them a great wrong. Among my principal and most loyal servants are two of our natural brothers who have sometimes managed my affairs here when I was at Russy and who have accounted to me loyally so that I am satisfied with them. I am in my debt to them as you can see by my Journal, which is an assurance of their money.

My brother, my friend, I beg you keep the promise you made to me touching my poor bastards. I beg you in God's name to feed them and teach them a trade by which they may earn their living, as you promised me. I have said that this letter shall only be given to you when God has called me from this world to Himself; Whom I beg to receive me with mercy, through the merit and passion of His only Son, Jesus Christ, Our Savior. May He have you in his keeping; written at Mesnil, this Saturday, tenth day of July, 1568.

Your brother and friend,

GILLES DE GOUBERVILLE.

From this illness, Gilles de Gouberville recovered and one cannot help wondering how this letter, which was to be delivered only in case of his death, could have remained to be read by us today.

In 1570, the Edict of Saint-Germain had proclaimed liberty of conscience in France — in the Cotentin the Protestants were permitted to practice their faith in public unmolested — so that the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, on August 24, 1572, was as unexpected as it was terrible. Two years later, Charles IX died and was succeeded by his brother, Henri III; so that, born under François I, Gilles de Gouberville lived through the reigns of Henri II, François II, Charles IX and into that of Henri III — under five kings of France.

In 1575, as a result of the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, all Normandy was again in arms; Montgomery, taken before Domfront by de Matignon, was beheaded and the country was a prey to roving bands of Huguenots and Catholics who were equally unscrupulous, sparing neither life nor property.

Among other treasures found at the château was a packet of letters from Charles Brucan, written to Gilles de Gouberville between 1560 and the time of his death, and another packet of letters from Gilles de Gouberville at Mesnil to Charles Brucan and Guyon Le Long at Russy, which, though they make no mention of public events, yet give a vivid impression of the insecurity of the moment.

In October, 1575, Brucan writes of a murder which must have shocked his master, since the victim was one of his old friends.

Tuesday last, as Monsieur de la Verge was returning from court, he was shot through the body and I have heard that there is no hope of his recovery, that the ball is in the body and they cannot find it; the barber thinks that the balls were poisoned, but I don't believe it and think that the barbers want the gentleman's money; they say that it was a man named Aulbin Le Sueur who shot him at the instigation of one of his heirs; I do not know who?

[A few days later, Brucan writes] If it were possible to send me half a pound of powder for the cannon to defend your house, it would be well.

Gilles de Gouberville ends his reply with the injunction,

I pray you let no one enter my room except you, Brucan, and Lajoye. Never mind how many people come to Russy, I do not want anyone to enter there. Put no one to sleep there in my absence, even the best friend I have in the world, unless he hands you a letter from me to say that he is to lodge in my chamber.

There is a gleam of light, however, in the general gloom, provided by such a carefully treasured note as the following. It is from Gilles de Crosville, that namesake at whose christening he had officiated, and who had married Gillonne, the little girl of the Manor of Saint-Naser.

Monsieur my uncle;

It has pleased God to give us a daughter for which reason we humbly beg you, if your health and convenience permit, to come here tomorrow and give us the honor of naming your great-niece. M. and Madame de Saint-Naser . . . and your niece salute you. With our very humble and affectionate regard, praying God, Monsieur, that He may give you good health and a long and happy life, from Saint-Naser, 10 April, 1576.

Always your humble and obedient nephew

DE CROSVILLE

Surely in spite of war's alarms, Gilles de Gouberville on his *haquenée*, followed by Lajoye, took the road he had so often traveled across country to Saint-Naser, to this christening in the second generation at which he was asked to stand as godfather. This baby was one day to marry the grandson of his friend the Sire de Cyffrevast and come as châtelaine to that château which is still standing near Mesnil-au-Val. It would have pleased our sire if he could have foreseen that, for we suspect him of a lively social discrimination.

In the letters that follow during the next two years, although there is constant mention of his ill health, he always

writes in a tone of affectionate confidence to both Brucan and Le Long and his interest in his land and his care for his servitors are unabated.¹⁰

August, 1578. Guyon, my friend, I beg you in no way to lessen the care and vigilance which I know that you have, as you have always had, in my affairs, for I think there is great need thereof, because of the malice of many and because of the weather which is bad for the season. I have not a blade of wheat yet and the mud is as deep as at Christmas. May God restore order to us and have you in his keeping.

To Guyon Le Long, care the Sire de Gouberville. Guyon, Philipin the bearer of this is going to Russy from me and from Gosselin's mother, to get news of his health and to bring him back if he is able to travel. Tell him that I forbid him to start unless he is quite recovered. And that I am more anxious over his illness than for what he may spend at Russy. I beg you to give him every care. Maistre Loys du Val died because he went out in the wind too soon with a swollen face, which is what, I hear, Gosselin has. And as the wind is east, he must not start till he is well. . . .

If he leaves, give to him and his guide, some bread and cold meat and a bottle of good cider for their journey. But unless he is quite well again, he will repent having started too soon.

Guyon, I beg you to keep an eye on all my affairs where your diligence and vigilance can profit me. . . . I put everything in your care. Look out for everything and everyone. Nothing will escape him who is on the watch. [*Qui de tous se guette a aucuns eschappe.*] Spare nothing which you may need. Do not leave the house, because of the evil times and the malice of the world. . . . I beg you to look after my affairs, as I firmly believe you do. God have you in his keeping and may He give us peace, patience and pardon.

On January 2, 1578, there is a long letter to Le Long, about the wheat he had received from Russy, about the wages for the threshers, about cider making, about selling his pigs, about the care of the wool, as well as the selling of forty to fifty pounds of winter butter. He signs himself, "*le tout vostre ami sans faintise*, de Gouberville." Then, having scrupulously attended to these practical concerns and duties, he as resolute-

ly turned his face to the end. His health was broken, he felt that he had not long to live and the fate of his unmarried daughters troubled him. Having written his letter to Russy, he sat down in his Manor of Mesnil-au-Val and drew up his will, a document so touching in its integrity that I give it in full:

Will of Gilles de Gouberville, gentleman.

January 2, 1578.

Witnessed the ninth of the same month in the same year.

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I, Gilles de Gouberville, gentleman, seigneur of Mesnil-au-Val, of Russy and of Housteville, make and order my last will and testament as follows: First: I commend my soul to God, our Father and Creator, beseeching Him in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and by the merit of His Passion, to receive it with mercy and to turn His face from my sins and offenses.

I desire that my body may be buried in the Church of Mesnil-au-Val beneath the seat where my predecessors and I have been accustomed to sit to hear divine service. And for the obsequies and for the interment of my body, I desire that a sum of twenty écus sol shall be taken.

I also desire that the sum of four écus sol shall be given to the poor of the parish of Mesnil and the same to the poor of the parish of Gouberville, this money to be distributed by the curés to those persons by whom they think it will be best employed.

Item — I give the sum of four écus d'or to the poor of the parish of Russy, to be distributed by the hand of my heir or heirs, to those persons most deserving help; and to each of the churches of these three parishes, I give three écus sol and the third of a sol for the repair of the churches of these parishes.

Item — I give to Tassine and Jacqueline, my natural daughters, to each sixty-seven écus d'or soleil; to each two oxen, three to four years old; to each two cows and four sheep; the whole good and sufficient; to each a bed supplied with a feather bolster and pillows; to each a tapestry cover, curtains and counterpane of fringed linen with all that goes with them and an oak chest with a lock, the whole good and sufficient.

Item — I give to each, two dresses of the same material and making

as those which I gave to their sister Loyse, wife of Pierre Noyon of Maupertus, of good cloth, to provide for their marriage. And in case that my heirs do not wish to support, feed, clothe and shoe them, I desire that my heir or heirs should pay them each the sum of seventy sols to help feed and support them until their marriage. And I desire and intend that these goods should be delivered to them free of all charges.

Item — I give to Arnulf, my natural brother, because of the good friendship that I bear him, the sum of thirty-five écus sol or ten head of cattle, male and female, which are at pasture in the forest and which are known as *bestes folles*, at Arnulf's choice.

Item — I give to Jacques Maillard Lajoye and his wife for the good service they have rendered me, not including what I owe them on their wages, thirty-five écus sol, with a bed, feather bolster and pillows, a tapestry cover and a counterpane and curtains of fringed linen, the whole good and sufficient to aid in marrying Marie, daughter of the said Maillard and his wife; with a cask of cider made of sweet apples of that which I have at Russy; and an oak chest with a lock which I had made and which is at Russy; and two cows, a choice of those which I have at Russy.

Item — I give and bequeath to my servant Guyon Le Long, at present living at Russy, forty écus sol in return for his faithful service, both at Russy and here, during the past five or six years.

Item — I give to Marie, Jeremye, David and Pierre, children of Jacques Maillard, to each a two-year-old heifer, four horses pastured in the forest of Brix, of which one shall be an old mare named Besinesse and her colt; the other two are fillies of the same mare, one brown, the other piebald; all of which I give them for the natural love I bear these little children.

Item — I give to Lucrece Plantart in return for her trouble in serving me for the past eight or nine years, feeding the stock here, the sum of twelve écus sol, as she has had nothing from me except her linen and shoes.

Item — For the honor of God, I give to Isabeau, the natural daughter of my late uncle Monsieur de Russy and wife of Michelet Fontaine of Russy, one of the cows at Russy or the sum of five écus at her choice.

Item — I give to all my servants, both here and at Russy, to each a bushel of wheat of the best at Russy or here.

And to execute this will and testament, I appoint *noble homme* Maistre Jehan Le Verrier, Sieur de Tocqueville, Advocat du Roi at

Valognes, my cousin, begging him most humbly to do me the honor of accepting this charge, giving him power and authority to execute it as it is written, without any change whatever. In testimony of which I write and sign my name this present, Thursday, January second, in the year one thousand, five hundred and seventy-eight at Mesnil-au-Val; [signed De Gouberville.]

Seven days later this will was witnessed by the curé and his farmer, Thomas Drouet, not at the manor, but at the inn in the village of Mesnil, before Jean Binet, notary, and his colleague, Jean Pivain. Was Gilles de Gouberville weary of internal strife and jealousies and desirous of dispatching this business quietly away from his household? We see that he has passed over in silence, not only Charlot and Cantepye, but his favorite Symonnet as well.

It is not difficult to picture the state of affairs and of feelings at the manor. Symonnet, for so many years the favorite and always sensitive on the subject of his irregular birth, saw with a jealous eye the growing ascendancy of the illegitimate daughters. He did not hesitate to range both Charlot and Cantepye on his side and they naturally had all the legitimate heirs, the Saint-Nasers and de Cresnays, in their party, as we can infer from the clause in the will suggesting that the heirs might not be willing to support these young girls.

Arnould, always in a more subordinate position, and neither as intelligent nor as spirited as Symonnet, made himself of use to his worried elder and won his gratitude. It must be added that we know Gilles de Gouberville had deeded land to Symonnet and possibly felt that he had given him his portion.

A month after the making of his will, Gilles de Gouberville, still anxious about the future of his daughters, bestowed the hand of Tassine on the "honorable man Jehan Bourdet, son of Thomas of the parish of Téil," in a paper which exists, dated February 6, 1578. This marriage did not take place till

several months after his death. The remaining daughter, Jacqueline, was married during the following year to "noble homme Michel du Bosc," doubtless helped thereto by her marriage portion, the gold écus, the good stuff dresses, the chest, the feather pillows and the cows and sheep.

Can we not see the scene at the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val upon the death of its master? The arrival of the legal heirs, Madame de Saint-Naser, now a woman of fifty-eight, with her daughter and son-in-law, M. and Madame de Crosville and the "niece de Cresnays"; the hostility of the two girls, Tassine and Jacqueline, who knew that their reign was over; and Symonnet, smarting from his defeat, but accepted by the family. The atmosphere must have been tense indeed.

What, in this situation, would have become of Gilles de Gouberville's papers? What happened to the last sixteen years of the Journal, which he must surely have written, since it had become too fixed a habit to break? We hold the clue in another paper, in which Jacqueline after her marriage to Michel du Bosc, "charges Madame de Cresnays with having seized papers concerning the succession; these papers have surely been taken by the said de Cresnays."

What more likely? Madame de Cresnays had every interest in destroying the last years of the Journal, in which there was probably good evidence of the increasing influence of the daughters who were living in the house. One can well imagine that lady wishing to put an end to all the irregularities and illegitimacies and to assure the full inheritance to her children and grandchildren, in two generations godchildren of Gilles de Gouberville.

As for Symonnet, we confess to some sympathy for him. Gilles de Gouberville, in spite of the affection that he bore him, always intended to keep him in a position of dependence and not until 1555 would the sire allow him to be legitimized and then only by church law, probably not wishing to put him

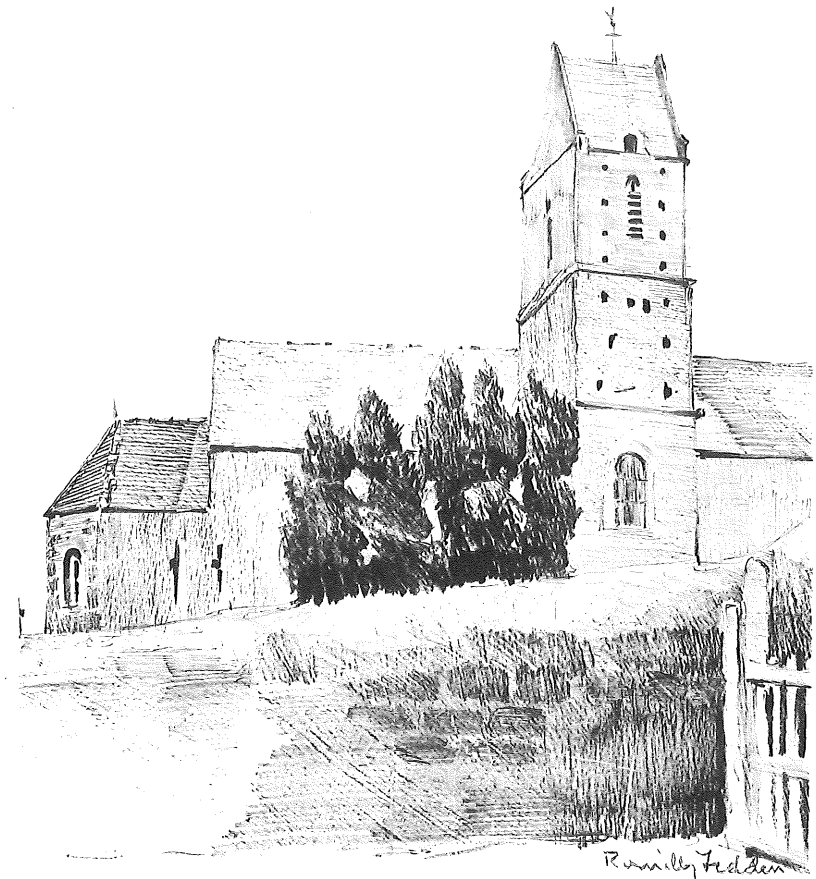
in a position to dispute the inheritance with Madame de Saint-Naser, nor caring to leave his mother's inheritance of Mesnil to the child of his father's mistress. But five months after Gilles de Gouberville's death, Symonnet reached the goal of his ambition. "Symonnet de Gouberville, of the parish of Mesnil" was legitimized "by charter, October, 1578, verified in the Chambre des Contes, October 12, for the sum of 20 livres."

It was in the late autumn of 1930 that I found myself walking along the wooded road from the manor to the village of Mesnil-au-Val, seeing before me the figure of the old seigneur, as he stalked to Sunday mass, "*dans sa belle robe de droguet fourrée de peaux de loup et de lombarde.*"

It is a grass-grown track, much less used today than in his time, when a busy swarming household, scores of laborers and many guests on foot and on horseback, daily passed this way. Here, on my right, surrounded by broad stones, with a step down to the clear water that slipped along the lane beside me, was the washing pool where the women beat and rinsed his fine linen shirts, ruffled, laced and hemstitched, while they chattered and laughed over Symonnet's latest escapade or discussed the presents they might receive on Saint Gilles' Day.

The air was very still with the peculiar hush of a late October day, as I walked on in a trance pleasantly melancholic, touched with that sentimental regret which is begotten of the memory of old times and this autumn season, when, at a bend of the road, I was not surprised to see M. le Curé coming towards me. Messire Jasper Troude — Messire Jehan Auvrey? The priest, home after thirty years of mission work in China, bowed to me. He smiled at my words of explanation, for, as a student of the Journal, he understood.

He turned and we walked on, until, as he paused, I stood looking up through the trees to the square tower of the



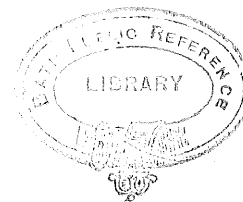
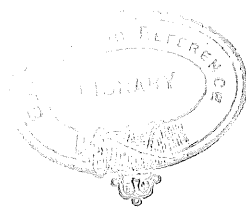
THE CHURCH AT MESNIL-AU-VAL WHERE
GILLES DE GOUBERVILLE IS BURIED, 1932
FROM A PENCIL SKETCH BY ROMILLY FEDDEN

church. I mounted the stone steps from the road to the churchyard and followed the worn stones of the path around to the side porch. "Went to mass at the parish church. Messire Jehan Fréret said mass. I brought him home to dinner."

We stepped in through the door. It was here that he came, Sunday after Sunday and sat in his inclosed pew, in the right transept, and, that he might see the celebration, had this slanting "squint" cut through the wall. I sat in the pew for a moment and the church bell sounded the hour, the bell that tolled for forty days at his decease, the honor meted by feudal law to one of his rank.

Here, in this bare little church, he presided over the village gatherings; outside in the churchyard he took his part in the wrestling or the bowls after vespers; and here he was buried. No stone marks the place, no tablet bears the family name upon the walls, for the Revolution passed this way, obliterating all marks of rank and prestige. Yet we believe that Sire Gilles de Gouberville is lying below the stone flags of the floor, according to the wish expressed in his testament, "I desire that my body shall be buried in the church of Mesnil, below the seat where my fathers and I have been accustomed to sit to hear divine service."

As we stood for a moment at the threshold, before turning back to the warm outside world, the curé bowed his head and I caught a flutter of his fingers and joined in his murmured words, "Dominus vobiscum — requiescat in pace."



Notes

1. Page xiii. Every year of the Journal begins on March 25. For example: "Mises et receptes faictes par moy, Gilles de Gouberville, d'empuys le jeudi, 25eme jour de Mars, 1555."

At that time, the year was variously dated, from December 25, from January 1, from Easter Day, or, as in the Journal, from March 25. In 1564, Charles IX decreed that all papers, both public and private, should be dated as from the year beginning January 1, but this law was not adopted until 1567.

In reading the Journal, it is necessary to remember that the months of January, February and March, (up to the twenty-fifth) must be put ahead a year to conform to our manner of dating.

2. Page 8. Here you have all the distinguishing marks of the typical sixteenth-century manor, or *gentilhommière*: towers, round dovecot, balls on the gateposts, and escutcheon above the door, though the arms have been chipped away.

The interior has, on the ground floor, two large center rooms, out of one of which you reach the circular staircase in the tower opposite the courtyard, two smaller rooms across the ends of the building and two round tower rooms; on the upper floor, there are two large rooms and six smaller rooms, including the tower rooms. All had fire chimney pieces which have been destroyed.

3. Page 11. The Curé of Mesnil tells me a pleasant story of the present owner of the Sire de Gouberville's manor. His name, by a strange coincidence, is Picot, although he is not connected with the de Gouberville family. He was born at the Manor of Brucan and his ambition since boyhood was to buy the Manor of Mesnil-au-Val, a hope fulfilled by its purchase in 1929.

4. Page 14. As at that time the land was all and the man had no value apart from his landed estates, from which he took his name, the family patronymic was often lost. Fathers and sons bore different names according to the properties they represented. In 1560, Gilles de Gouberville was involved in a lawsuit with a cousin over a piece of land, the deed for which stood in the name of Gilles Picot. The cousin, who was also named Gilles Picot, claimed it, pretending that the sire's name was Gouberville, not Picot. Gilles de Gouberville proved his right to both names and the suit was decided in his favor.

It must have been slightly confusing to "dine with the Baron Tuboeuf and his brother the Sieur de Saulsey and Le Tourp and his brother Le Londe." As for the family name of the sire's brother-in-law, it does not appear in the Journal and it is only by chance we discover the relationship of the six brothers. They were: Sieur de Saint-Naser; Robert de Moncel, Prior of the Abbey of Cherbourg; Sieur de Vascognes, Canon of the Abbey of Bernay; Sieur d'Ardennes; Sieur des Hachées; and the Prior of Coullons.

It was customary on taking possession of a property to inform the world of the change of name by letter: "December 5, 1555. Jehan Merigot brought me a letter from the Baron de la Luthumière, announcing his change of name."

5. Page 23. Monsieur Paul Le Cacheux, the well-known archivist at Rouen, has recently published a brochure containing Louis Picot's condemnation and pardon, both of which he discovered in the Archives Nationales.

I. The first document is headed:

Act of the Parliament of Rouen which condemns to pain of death Adrien du Parc, Baron d'Ingrande, Louis Picot, Sieur de Gouberville and their accomplices for the murder of Dom Martin de Betheville, Prior of Truttemer.

Monsieur Le Cacheux explains the intervention of the King by the influential family connections of the Baron d'Ingrande, who was a cousin of Louis Picot's.

The pardon reads:

FRANÇOIS Ier, King, etc. Know by these presents that we have received the humble supplication of Adrian Le Parc, Baron d'Ingrande and Louis Picot, called de Gouberville, stating that on the Vigil of Saint Magdalene last, the said Picot went to see and to visit the said Du Parc, his relative, as was their custom one with the other; they decided to go coursing hare with their dogs, for pastime and exercise, and took with them their servants, Nicolas de la Lande, Guillaume Robellot and a *laqué*. After they had followed the dogs for a long time, in the heat of July, they were so worn out and so thirsty they could hardly speak. As it was about five or six in the evening, they inquired, near a hamlet called Petit Trottemer, for a tavern where they could get something to drink. One was indicated and . . . du Parc and his servant La Lande went ahead to have the wine ready, with no thought of anything but to quench their thirst, being so tired and thirsty that it would have been very difficult to get home without something to drink. They felt themselves very lucky to have found this tavern on their way.

When they entered the small lower room of the inn, which they found open, . . . du Parc told them to bring wine and then saw a monk, named

Marin de Betheville, sitting at a table with some others whom he did not know. This Betheville wore a sword and beside him lay a loaded arquebus. He always went thus armed, in bad company, mixed up in some quarrel, an evil liver, proud and marvelously insolent, as he now showed himself; for, annoyed presumably, because du Parc entered too freely into this room where he was at table (although in such rooms open to all, no one observes any ceremony) the said de Betheville, monk, overcome by anger and the defiance that he felt against all those who knew him for what he was, shouted some words which du Parc did not understand and, at the same time upset the table against du Parc who was near, as the room was small and it was impossible to enter it without having the table in front of you.

De Betheville then seized his arquebus which he placed against the said plaintiff and fired, but luckily it did not go off. At that, de Betheville put his hand to his sword to fall upon the said du Parc, when du Parc seeing his fury and the danger he was in, in self-defence drew his sword and struck him several blows, wounding the said de Betheville and one of his company, Jehan Aubert, priest, though he does not know in what parts of their bodies as he was out of his head, overcome by anger at the peril and danger in which he found himself. Since then he has heard that both men have died because of their wounds and that another of the company was wounded without being in danger of death.

As this was happening, the said Picot, who came after, arrived in the tavern kitchen and hearing the noise and believing that his relation, the said du Parc, . . . had been killed or severely wounded, meeting, as he entered, one of Betheville's servants, gave him two or three sword thrusts from which he, also, was in danger of death. For which reasons the said supplicants, fearing the rigor of the law, left the country. . . .

Considering this statement: this misfortune and most untoward incident were caused by the aggression and fault of the said de Betheville who contrary to his religious vows, led a depraved and dissolute life and was accustomed to provoke such unfortunate quarrels, in which he had killed . . . or severely wounded many honest people; added to which is the fact that the said supplicants, in all their doings and acts heretofore, have honestly conducted and governed themselves. . . .

Wherefore, We give this command to the bailiff of Mortaing or his lieutenant, in whose jurisdiction this case has been brought. . . . Given at Argilly, in the month of September, in the year of grace, one thousand, VC, forty-six, and the thirty-second of our reign.

Signed by the King, at the instance of the Counsel Lalemand. Visa Contentor. Lalemand and sealed with green wax on silk.

(Archives Nationales. J. J. 257 N. 165, fol. 145 verso.)

6. Page 24. My surmise was correct. The Manor of Saint-Naser is the pride of its owners, M. and Mme. Pierre Paris. On a later visit in May, 1932, M. Paris showed me the deeds of the property which was bought by his grandfather, in 1812, from one Hennot, a name which appears in the Journal, though not belonging to the Saint-Naser family.

As may be seen in the drawing, there is a strip of machicolation below the eaves of the house, which commands the entrance to the tower. Such machicolations are often found in the old manors of Normandy and Brittany, being parts of earlier buildings. Even in the golden age of the sixteenth century, it was necessary to be prepared for attack from robbers and marauders, so that even the most peaceful looking of these manors were provided with loopholes from which to shoot, in tower, wall, or in the treads of the stairs.

The opposite side of the manor, its granite walls hung with wistaria and roses, faces a well-tended garden. About a hundred meters from the house, in a field, are the ruins of the Chapel of Saint-Naser, doubtless the one in which the little Gillonne was christened in the presence of her godfather, Gilles de Gouberville.

The interior of the manor preserves little of interest to us, as it has been completely modernized.

7. Page 31. For the tragic story of the passion of this brother and sister, we must refer the reader to Tancred Martel's fascinating study, written from contemporary documents, called *Julian et Marguerite de Ravalet*. Suffice it to say that, married at the age of fourteen to a man of forty, Marguerite escaped from her husband's house in Valognes, disguised as a man, to elope with her brother, several years her senior. After months of fugitive wandering in the country, they took refuge in a small hotel in Paris, under assumed names, where they were tracked by the husband, arrested and thrown into prison. It was there Marguerite gave birth to a child and immediately afterward came to trial, where she faced shame unflinchingly in an effort to save her brother; she failed, owing to the inhumanity of the man who had married her. The brother and sister were beheaded together, at the ages of sixteen and nineteen, on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville in Paris, before an enormous crowd of sympathizers.

8. Page 77. What would we not give to have the names of those twelve books!

Noël du Fail, a Breton country gentleman, writing in the sixteenth century, says that the books ordinarily found upon the shelf of a manor were: The Holy Bible in King Charles V's translation, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, *The Golden Legend*, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *Ogier the Dane*, *Melusine*, and *The Four Sons of Aymon*.

There is also in existence an inventory of the books in the Château

of La Motte-Champdeniers in the Vienne, made on the death of the Seigneur François de Rochechouart, December 4, 1530.

First, a book written by hand, entitled, *The Book of Battles*. (*Cy commence le livre des batailles*.)

Item, *The Common Law of Poitou*, printed. (*Le Coustumier de Poitou, en molle*.)

Item, *The Royal Ordinances*. (*Les Ordonnances royaulx*.)

Item, another book written by hand, called *The Verger's Dream*. (*Le Songe du vergier*.)

Item, another book, printed, bound, covered in red, called *The Rural Compendium*. (*La Somme rurale*.)

Item, a book printed, called *The Book of Politics*. (*Le Livre de polithicque*.)

Item, *Thucydides' Orations*. (*Les Harangues recueillies en Lucidille*.)

Item, the first book of Froissart, in parchment, written by hand, covered in red with large bosses (boutons de leton).

Item, *The Annales de France*, printed.

Item, *The Doings and Sayings of King Charles V*.

Item, a printed book in the Italian language.

Item, a book in parchment, written by hand, beginning, The Romance of Bertrand, with steel bosses.

Item, a book of history in parchment, written by hand, in a small volume, commencing, Most Christian, High and Puissant Prince, Charles V.

Item, a book of short pieces, written by hand, with a stag painted on the cover.

Item, another old book in paper, written by hand, called a *Common-place Book*. (*Sur toutes choses*.)

This shows a taste for more serious reading than the Breton's list of romances.

9. Page 95. On my last visit to Mesnil-au-Val, I discovered a small triangular piece of untended ground, surrounded by a low wall and approached by three cut-stone steps. The grass was thick with wild primroses of exceptionally fine size and color and there, in a tangle of young green, I found persistent iris and periwinkle and the pink flower known as *desespoir du peintre*.

This had once been a well-cultivated corner, filled with flowers — for the bees? A sheltered, sunny place for a *jardin à mouche*?

10. Page 199. As an example of the seigneur's sixteenth-century

French, I give one of his letters to Guyon Le Long, his Bailiff at Russy:

A Guyon Le Long,
chez le Sr de Gouberville
a Russy.
10 Decembre, 1577.

Guyon, mon amy, Je vos recommande mes affaires faicte ce que vos pourres par vostre bon soing et dilligence; si je ne viens a Russy je y envoye en bref. Lajoye y seroit longtemps a, mays il est mal disposé de son estomac d'empuys douze jours (combien qu'il ne garde pinct son lict) mays je crains que le trot de son cheval qui est fort rude a monter luy empyrast sa santé. J'ay bien grant désir d'aller a Russy et croy que le besoing ne m'en est pas moindre, mays je ne puy encore pour plusieurs affaires qui me retienne ycy. Dieu vis ayt en sa garde; du Mesnil se mardi au soyr, 10 Decembre 1577.

Le tout vostre amy,
De Gouberville,

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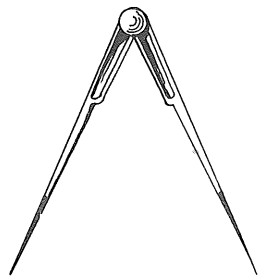
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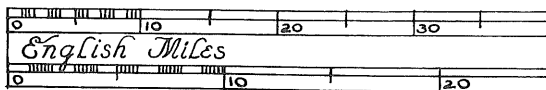
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The Old Departments
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La Manche and Calvados
1932



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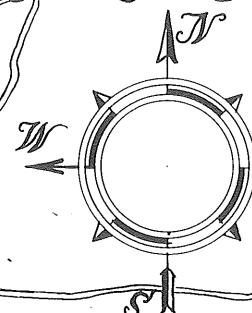
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